EPITAPH FOR EUROPE

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PAUL TABORI

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FOREWORD

WHEN "EPITAPH FOR EUROPE" was first published, critics on both sides of the Atlantic objected to its "gloomy, nostalgic tone" and to the fact that its political contents were not definite enough. Now it is always disastrous for a writer to argue with his reviewers, but this new edition, reaching the largest possible readers' circle in war-time Britain, presents a welcome opportunity to explain in a few words the purpose of the book and the "message" it hopes to carry. I hope that those who believe in Europe as passionately as I do won't grudge me this opportunity.

I do not think that *Epitaph for Europe* is a pessimistic or unduly nostalgic book. I have tried to show seventeen countries between the two wars—or during the long, uneasy armistice—mainly through their writers, artists, intellectuals; but also through the man-in-the-street, the workers in the factories, the peasants in the fields, the black-coated clerks in the offices. I certainly think that pre-1939 Europe is dead, and on the whole I do not regret her demise. But I am convinced that we can profit by the long-drawn agony, the senseless suffering, the terrible blunders of a continent which has failed to learn the lessons of 1914–18 and now must pay for this a thousand-fold.

I belong to no political party, I believe in no special brand of world-salvation. Perhaps it would be presumptuous of me to do so in any case, as I am at the moment an alien in a hospitable and tolerant country; a country which one day I hope to call my own. That is why I have not offered any definite creed, political or religious, as a basis for the new Europe; unless it be some sort of federation. But I have tried to show the folly and criminal blindness of chauvinistic isolation, of ingrained prejudices and "sacred egotism." I have attempted to formulate the principles of the "good European," that not at all mythical personality into which we all must transform ourselves.

The foreigner in Great Britain, if over-sensitive or of a superficial pride, is often appalled and hurt by the indifference

and ignorance displayed about his particular country. Yet mature and unbiassed consideration will probably discover the same ignorance, if not the same indifference, in the average European of any country, about the United Kingdom, the U.S.A., Russia or China. The fact is that while the development of transport has diminished the size of the world, this salutary effect of our civilization has been more than counteracted by the stupid arbitrary walls which human beings erected around themselves. These barricades must come down; only then can we think of understanding and . . . liking each other.

Because the Channel has been there before passports, visas and currency restrictions; because the English have always been self-sufficient—this mental isolation has been always more pronounced in these islands than on the Continent. We have been promised social, financial, cultural changes after this war; responsible statesmen have declared that there won't be a return to the old evil ways; but all this will be of no avail if corresponding changes are not made in our mental attitude to other nations. That is why I stressed the immense rôle education is destined to play in the re-making of Europe, of the whole globe.

I have heard foreign statesmen, exiled in London, speak with anxiety, even terror, about the possibility of Great Britain returning to isolation; and I have heard not a few English voices raised in disgust and exasperation, declaring that the task is too large, that charity must begin at home; that after the war the Anglo-Saxons must look first to their own problems, re-build their own cities, restore their own lives. This is a natural desire. But remember that we are fighting a life-and-death struggle to-day because Danzig was a distant city and Czechoslovakia a far-away country. Remember how the Americans harboured a vociferous isolationist group which, up to Pearl Harbour, managed to sway millions of its countrymen by describing Europe as a "hopeless mess." Remember that the League failed because the U.S.A. let it down. Remember your own feelings when trouble brewed in Spain, in Abyssinia, in Austria, in Albania.

This time we must learn the lesson and act accordingly. Britain is on the edge of Europe, yet she belongs to the European Community. If she realizes this and educates her children to become Good Europeans, if the great and wonderful North American democracy refuses to sever the links which the bodies

and souls of her soldiers must forge in blood and sweat before this fight is over—then all is well. In *Epitaph for Europe* I have tried to show a disintegrating continent. It is my secret hope that in the not too distant future I will be able to write another book, perhaps a companion piece, which can be called "Resurrection of Europe." More than on anything else this resurrection depends on the Anglo-Saxon contribution to the new world for which men and women fight and die to-day.

London
January 1943 *Paul Tabori*

Men till the soil with plough and hoe,
Men sow the seed in each furrow:
Men provide for children and wife,
Men acquire money, grow prosperous . . .

In hope the soil is tilled,
In hope the seed is sown,
In hope the merchant sails away
On the high seas to win his wealth:
The hope which bids me to stay,
This hope shall be my success here.

And again and again seed is sown
And again and again the cloud-gods pour
And again and again the field is ploughed
And again and again new owners come.

And always there shall be beggars begging
And always there shall be givers giving
And always there shall be new gifts
And always they shall find new heavens.

From THE SONGS OF GAUTAMA BUDDHA

PRELUDE OF FIRE

I

FOR HOURS we had groped through a nightmare. Flames jumping above the chimney-pots, licking at the sky; the stench of burning leather, the crackle of wood and the tinkle of shattering glass; a man-made inferno. Slim jets of water cascading upwards, looking helpless and futile against the growing conflagration; firemen running about amidst limp lengths of hose, climbing tall ladders and balancing precariously on the top; A.T.S. girls, sitting in neat, grey cars, writing reports or serving tea; a few gaping sightseers, dodging the rain of glass whenever a huge pane cracked; the dome of Saint Paul's, rising proudly and serenely above the crowded City streets, superbly contemptuous of any danger; the acrid taste of smoke and flying

embers, sticking in our throats. . . . It was pure and carefully planned arson on a gigantic scale, the successful attempt of a few scores of *Luftwaffe* pyromaniacs to destroy history and tradition within the "square mile." There had been surprisingly few H.E.'s; the beacons they had lit beckoned in vain across the Channel.

The raiders had passed; and we were standing on the Heath, watching the Great Fire of London. The glare was unreal, almost theatrical: red tinged with gold and the grey-black pall of smoke. The blotchy snow reflected the glow and the moon swam above our heads like a cynical non-belligerent.

There were four of us: the suave, portly American with his eye-glass gleaming in the moonlight; the Englishman with his tousled white hair and shrewd eyes behind gold-rimmed spectacles; the tall, ruddy-faced Swede—and myself.

Suddenly the American cried out, his voice choking with anger:

"There goes your civilization! There goes your precious heritage!"

He turned to the Englishman.

"Don't you feel furious about it? Wouldn't you like to go and do something about it—something drastic—now, at once?"

And when there was no answer, he added:

"No, of course you wouldn't. I suppose if one of Goering's precious boys came swinging down at the end of a parachute, you would offer him a cigarette and a cup of tea."

The Englishman blinked and said, mild surprise in his voice:

"Funny that you should say that. You know, I *did* offer him a cigarette though I couldn't give him tea."

"What do you mean?" the American asked.

"Well, you see, a few months ago my little place at Beckenham was bombed. The bomb landed in the garden, between the shelter and the house. My wife and I were in the shelter and nothing much happened to us apart from a little shock and a few bruises. But the house didn't escape so easily. Jerry-built, Jerry-busted, as people used to say in the East End. When we picked ourselves up, we found that the top floor had collapsed and there was no way of getting in . . ."

"But, Charles," the Swede protested, "you never told us . . ."

"Oh, everybody was talking bombs at that time," the white-haired newspaperman explained. "You would have thought

me a bore. . . . But I was rather vexed, you know. We had just finished paying for the new carpets and I had two new bookcases put into the study. . . ."

"And that was when the Nazi airman came down?" the American asked, incredulity making him almost hoarse.

"No, that happened a few days later," Charles told him patiently. "You see, I had a golf-club I was particularly fond of and I thought there was just a chance it had remained whole —it was in a cupboard under the stairs. So a couple of days after we had our bomb—my wife had gone up north to stay with her sister—I went back to see whether I could salvage it. The policeman wouldn't let me in at first, but I sneaked through the back. When I came out, there was the Nazi, dangling from a pole in the garden next door. I had found the club and was clutching it in my left hand. While I was inside, I had heard some machine-gun firing and the warning had gone hours ago—but you know, we paid little attention by that time to daylight raids. So we stared at each other, the Nazi, suspended, like a nailed bat, and I, holding the club. Then I walked towards him and he seemed to shrink. His helmet had come off; he was very young. He seemed to be terribly afraid, probably thought I would kill him or something. But I could never hit a man who was afraid of me. So I helped him down and as he was shaking badly, I gave him a cigarette. He jabbered something in German and I took him down the road to the policeman . . ."

"Oh, you are hopeless!" the American cried. "Can't you ever get mad, real, fighting mad? You will be licked, you know, if you don't."

"I don't think so," the Englishman replied meditatively.

"But don't you feel anything about this?" I asked, and pointed to the glow which still seemed to be spreading.

"Yes," he said slowly. "A good deal. There was a pub in Cheapside where I spent part of the first cheque I ever got from a newspaper. And the little shop where they had the best briars in London. Oh, scores of other things. But we'll rebuild London—I only hope the idiots won't bungle the job. And we have still got all that London and the City stands for —you know, a fair chance for all and the right to stand up and blast the Prime Minister and . . ."

"Yes," the Swede cried, suddenly excited. "You have still got all that makes England a democracy. No fire can

destroy that. But what about the fires over there, beyond the Channel? Haven't they destroyed something which can never be rebuilt? What about the fires of Europe?"

"Europe is finished," the American said curtly. "The best thing would be to move the few millions who are worthy of survival and settle them somewhere in a new continent."

"Not quite the best solution," I ventured. "You remember what Jan Masaryk said when they asked him about his war-aims? 'I want to go home.' Yes, that was all and it was the best definition of Mankind's highest desires I have ever heard. We all want to go home—but will there be a home for us?"

The tall Swede with the rugged face seemed to be very eager to interrupt. But I continued:

"Oh, I don't mean by 'home' bricks and mortar, a roof or a street. Europe is dead, finished—you are right—but it's only the Europe we knew, in which we grew up, the Europe of Proust and Pirandello, of Thomas Mann and Freud. It was not a perfect place and it had been dying a long time. But it was the only Europe we knew and for quite a few of us it was home, whatever country had issued our passports . . ."

"Nonsense," the American said sharply. "Whatever was fine in European culture and civilization, has found a home in the States. Why, we have got your best writers and artists, your most famous scientists and philosophers—and we have got them for keeps."

"Excuse me," the Swede intervened at last, "but do you think that Thomas Mann is writing the same kind of books in New York as he wrote in Germany? Do you think that Paul Valéry composes the same poems in Nazi-occupied Paris as he did in the halcyon days before Hitler? No . . . their age, the age of Hofmannsthal and Rilke, of Bunin and Wildgans has died. And God knows what horror will follow this war . . ."

"*Exit Europa*," the Englishman murmured. "Well, she had only herself to blame . . ."

"Not a very kind epitaph," I protested. "I would put it in a more understanding way . . ."

"Why don't you?" the American asked. "We in the States like to hear about vanished glory and faded greatness. It makes us feel the more vigorous when we can pity what was lost by madness and murder . . ."

Slowly the glare below us began to contract. The moon was paling and for the first time we felt the bitter cold. We walked

back to the car and none of us spoke. Perhaps we all felt a little ashamed.

II

For days and weeks and months I carried with me the memory of that winter night and the words we had spoken high above the burning London. I thought of the white-haired Englishman who had two sons serving in the R.A.F. and who gave a cigarette to the German airman because the Nazi was young and frightened. For him Europe was the source of trouble, the unreasonable conglomeration of national appetites and inhibitions which had dragged England into war twice within a quarter century. He was prepared to suffer and fight for what he considered the right tradition—but he would much rather keep out of it. . . . I thought of the American who was intensely irritated by the stupidity of Europe. To him the bickerings, the fights, the clashes, seemed rather absurd—as if Texas would declare war on Illinois because a Chicago newspaper had written something insulting about the citizens of San Antonio. For him the culture of Europe was something to import or to patronize ; he resented the fact that some of it was not for foreign trade. The Swede —yes, he was a European, but up in the north he had been safe until very recently, safe from the constant danger of bomb and tank in which the rest of Europe had lived since 1914. He faced towards the Northern Lights and his people had not fought for many generations.

Before Hitler and the other new prophets had discovered the dogma that blood was so much more important than brains, the proudest title a man between the Urals and the Mediterranean could give himself was—*a good European*. We knew that we would not live to see the United States of Europe—but the spirit could fly across the frontiers. The music of Debussy, the painting of Picasso, the books of Wassermann or Ortega y Gasset, the magic art of Reinhardt or Stanislavsky belonged to all of us. In spite of all the silly tribal laws of nationalism we spoke a language which we all understood. Maeterlinck was not a Belgian ; his bees and his Blue Bird were the property of us all. The Fallen Angels of Anatole France had become the symbol of our own fight with good and evil ; when Moissi spoke the verses of " Everyman " in front of the Salzburg Cathedral, the sweet cadences of his voice found their echo in

the heart of every good European; when Toscanini raised his baton, we followed every bar of the symphony with the knowledge that it was written and played for the enjoyment of Bulgarian and Portuguese, of Basque and Pole alike. And though youth was a punishable crime in the Europe between the two world wars, youth has its hopes, its leaders and its triumphs. I recalled the nights swirling with pale-grey cigarette smoke; the nights through which we talked in Paris, in Vienna, in Berlin, in Budapest . . . nights when everything seemed to be possible, no idea too daring, no battle too hopeless. I thought of the men and women in all the cities of Europe, groping for an understanding, often wrapped in the phobias of some fanatic loyalty or chasing a ghost . . . and yet secure in the certainty that they would always find ears which would listen, lips which would answer.

And I thought of Atlantis, the continent buried under the sea where seaweed weaves through the windows of the palaces and the bells of the marble churches are muted for ever. That was the Europe of which I propose to write this epitaph.

III

To compose an epitaph is to be a prophet after the event. Whatever you do, you cannot escape the fatal fault of the "I-told-you-so." Facts fall into the pattern of a mosaic much too easily. One is apt to think that the actions, opinions, dreams and cruelties of certain people were all pre-arranged and planned to produce results which no one was able to perceive clearly before. To write a spiritual history of the Europe between the two world wars is a hopeless beginning. Perhaps in twenty, in fifty years a new Gibbon or Spengler will be born who will show the trends and analyse the motives of the unhappy continent. But what can someone do who is much too close to the events and tragedies of those twenty-one years? He can delve into the somewhat worn bag of his memories and pull out at random whatever he finds in it. Much of this may be startling for himself; much of it incongruous and much too garish. Yet the epitaph of Europe cannot be composed as a synthesis; her life was far too chaotic, her passions far too violent. The Europe of our nostalgia, the Europe to which we can never return, lived twenty-one years, but she crowded into these years a century of contrasts, ideas, laughter and tears.

When I was born, the world around us seemed to be secure. If someone decided that his son should become a doctor and attain a certain grade of prosperity, he could be reasonably sure that the boy would be able to finish his studies within a given number of years and that once he had put up his sign, he would not lack patients. People could retire at the threshold of old age and smoke a pipe in front of a modest cottage. Of course, there was always trouble somewhere—usually in the Balkans—but wars seemed to be outmoded, relics of a barbarian past which could never be resurrected. Then war *was* resurrected and we lived through four years of misery and terror. I could not remember what oranges or white rolls were like, or when I had eaten them last, by the time they returned again to a Europe bled white. I lived through two revolutions, an occupation by a hostile and rapacious army, the brief but horrible period of reactionary terror. Then, slowly and timidly, Europe began to revive and start rebuilding. I saw Warsaw when half the buildings were being pulled down and half the city was growing from the naked soil. I watched my landlady in Berlin go off shopping with a basketful of banknotes, not knowing whether, at the butcher's, the price of pork would be fixed in millions or billions. Italy was proud of having found a dictator who would make the trains run on time and discipline even the Naples beggars. France was playing musical chairs with her governments and Austria tried to survive with a socialist capital and a reactionary countryside. Hungary was spending borrowed money like water and Spain chased away her king—not for the first or the last time. A king was murdered at Marseilles and thousands of families were put across the border with their pitiful bundles. Another king returned and ousted his own son from the throne. Russia staggered to her feet after the ideas of world-wide Communism had been defeated under the walls of the Polish capital. Britain—suddenly at an incredible distance—watched a general strike and saw a National Government start on the long slippery road which led to Munich.

There was unrest, suffering, cruelty and lust in this Europe of ours—but on the whole there was also happiness. Good books were written, artists flourished, people went to the opera and the concert-house. There was no sense of impending doom, no, not even after Hindenburg was blackmailed or bullied into making the "Bohemian corporal" Chancellor of the Reich.

My Europe was very old and very young at the same time ; she refused to believe in death. In the long, hot summer of 1936 people stayed up all night in Budapest to find out whether the Hungarian fencing team had won the Olympic award and whether the water polo cup would go to the Germans or their own boys. Very few people foresaw the disaster, fewer still raised their voices. It came so suddenly and no political commentator could make me believe that it could have been averted. In those twenty-one years Europe produced a fair number of masterpieces in literature, art, music—even on the "silver screen." She was vigorous and full of plans. And on the whole she was happy.

IV

So let me reach into that bag of memories and try to build the pebbles into a mosaic. Perhaps it will be just a crazy pavement. Europe is dead—the Europe in which we, the present generation of thirty-odd, have grown up, made love, dreamed, talked. I do not want to write a lament or an accusation of her murderers. Just an epitaph.

Perhaps the Europe-to-be which must be so utterly different from the old one, discovers a warning in these pages. For Man cannot live without faith and the hope that mistakes will not be repeated. Yet we do not know when and how the resurrection will come.

One

> O Man! seek no further for the author of evil; thou art he. There is no evil but the evil you do or the evil you suffer, and both come from yourself. Evil in general can only spring from disorder, and in the order of the world I find a never-failing system.
>
> J.-J. ROUSSEAU

> That nation which makes the best use of iron will always subjugate another that has more gold but less courage.
>
> VOLTAIRE

> I can never mutinie so much against France but I must needes looke on Paris with a favourable eye: It hath my hart from infancy, whereof it hath befalne me as of excellent things: the more other faire and stately cities I have seene since, the more hir beauty hath power and doth still usurpingly gaine upon my affection.
>
> MONTAIGNE

JAMAIS D'AUDACE

I

THERE IS a fundamental, almost fatal difference in the simple geographical alternative of arriving in Paris for the first time from the east or from the west.

In a spasm of after-dinner frankness, an Englishman told me once: "You know, for most of us the Balkans begin at Calais." Even if perhaps few would share this view, tasting of the one-day trippers to Boulogne, could it be denied that the British or the Americans set foot on French soil in an utterly different frame of mind from that of the Continental? Arriving in Paris meant for most Englishmen a mental loosening of collar and tie, a spiritual donning of informal clothes. There were, of course, always the escapists for whom Paris was the Mecca, the haven from English cooking and climate. But with very few exceptions these have remained insular and their reactions were only skin deep. Few have penetrated as deeply into the French soul and mentality as Charles Morgan did in "The Voyage" or R. C. Hutchinson in "The Shining Scabbard"—and only a handful more got as far as the creator of Aristide Pujol. But even for Mr. Locke the mercurial Southerner remained "quaint" and utterly strange.

The mental map of France as drawn by almost all the English and American visitors consists of an immense Paris with Montmartre, the Quartier Latin, the main boulevards and the Rue de la Paix squeezing the other arrondissements into the dim distance; the Riviera and one or two "native places" like Carcassone, Annecy or Blois. The rest is blotted out, non-existent. A few had ventured into the uncharted interior and

had met the " aborigines," but their experiences are discounted or disbelieved.

We who approach from the east approach Paris in the spirit of a religious pilgrimage—even if we are foolish enough to try and earn our living there. For us it is seldom a " naughty and gay " city. She means to us freedom, an almost anarchistic liberty of talk and thought. We have studied our Balzac and Zola, our Gide and Villon. Every street is a revelation, every hotel the focal point of a thousand associations and memories. Whether we are poets or painters, students or factory workers, Paris has a hundred daily secrets for us to solve. Again and again we make the foolish attempt of trying to penetrate beyond the façade and discover what the French are like—but Paris is perhaps the worst place for this undertaking in the whole of France. In desperation we turn to the countryside—not to the trails of the tourist, the haunts of the birds-of-passage who flit from one fashionable resort to the other, but to uninteresting and commonplace towns like Roubaix or Arnay-le-Duc—and usually find there the same baffling, icy reserve. I have spoken to a workman in Roubaix who had moved to that industrial centre from a place fifteen miles away—after ten years he was still a stranger and forced to make friends with other " new-comers " like himself. How much more rigid the bars, severe the regulations, which kept us at arms' length—the straying riff-raff of a dozen countries who loved Paris and France with a hopeless, unrequited passion!

We were looking up, while the English " milord " and the American " millionaire " were looking down. And the French were equally contemptuous of both groups. A dangerous generalization? Look in your heart and try to answer honestly the question: Did you ever meet a Frenchman in whom you did not feel a greater restraint, a stronger repulse of any approach than in the most insular Briton? East and West wooed them, and they were afraid to give themselves, in spite of all their superficial friendliness, their over-articulate self-criticism, their facile passion. The Maginot Line was only a concrete counter-part of the invisible barrier behind which they lived. *Jamais d'audace*—it was the tragic motto of Frenchmen between 1918 and 1939. And when I thought of this, pondering my own everyday experiences, I always remembered Epaminondas Gruene.

That worthy German enthusiast came to Paris during the

great revolution. He called himself a "citizen of the world," and believed not only in the equality of all men but also the absolute uselessness of all national groupings. He lived through part of the Terror—and then was thrown into the Conciergerie, herded with the aristocrats whom he hated, and finally executed as a German spy. How he had wooed the French and how little he had understood them! He lost his head because he thought that anything French could be really international—in spite of the Goddess of Reason.

"*Jamais d'audace*"—and we who had the impudence to expect this audacity were soon disillusioned. Yet what else can Paris and France be for us than a glorious memory, unsullied by the Vichy nightmare, food for our dreams, the calm, unwavering beacon of reason in an insane world?

II

When I came to Paris for the first time, I was very poor. I had scraped together the price of a ticket from Berlin and had a few hundred francs left, no overcoat, and the minimum of luggage. It was the year when brokers were jumping in droves from the New York skyscrapers (at least that was the impression one gathered from the American papers) and the earthquake of Wall Street was felt in the farthest and smallest countries. The Belgian with whom I travelled from Mulhouse to Paris, just shrugged when I asked him what the chances of earning a living were. *He* was going back to Brussels, only stopping in Paris to collect the contents of his flat.

When I stepped from the Gare de l'est, I sniffed for the first time that indescribable and unforgettable smell of Paris—the mixture of petrol, tar, and a dozen other untraceable ingredients which make up the perfume of Lutetia. I left my shabby bag at the station and plunged into the maze of streets, hungrily, avidly, as if I had to get acquainted with as many of them as I could in the shortest time possible.

The streets of Paris! Nowhere is the melody of human life so loud and moving as in these streets. On one side the great arteries, the boulevards, bathed in the rainbow colours of electric signs—and on the other the narrow and grim side streets, reflecting the gaslight as the canals of Venice mirror the stars. Even their names are a feast for the memory: Rue du Pré-aux-Clercs, Rue du Château-d'Eau, Rue du Cherche-Midi, Rue du

Chat-qui-Pêche (immortalized by a prize-winning novel), Rue du Paradis, Rue des 7-Arpents, and all the rest. . . .

Of course I lived in the Quartier; the hotel, like a dozen others was called after France and the street after the sedate and industrious Swedish botanist, Linné. The Boul' Mich' and the cafés were a few hundred yards away; the Panthéon rose with classic dignity above the crowded streets—and Paris was mine.

It was with considerable dismay that I discovered Paris was not one city but half a dozen. There was the shop-window Paris, displaying her charms and her wares to those who could afford to pay. There was the artists', writers' and cranks' Paris, centred round the Dôme and the Rotonde, shunned by the "natives" and being a Continental version of the Country Beyond the Looking Glass. There was the Paris of misery and crime, without the glamour of Sue's "Mystères"; a Paris into which a foreigner might walk blindly and vanish tracelessly as a Hungarian schoolmaster whom I knew had done; the Paris round Fort Monjol and the outer boulevards, with its startling centres at the foot of the Sacré Cœur and the Rue Asselin. There was the Paris of the politicians, who seemed to be wrapped up in their game of musical chairs and endless matches of mud-slinging. There was also the Paris of the rentier, which could remain closed to every foreigner, however distinguished; the Paris of the small workmen and midinettes; the Paris of the priests and white-frocked little girls going to their first Communion; the Paris of the museums and libraries—and though all these were overlapping, interlocking and meeting, you could never explore one without being conscious that you were excluded from most of the others. I read and dreamed about the Institut and the Comédie, but these were, too, worlds within worlds, and as complicated as the pattern according to which the bouquinistes laid out their intriguing wares along the Seine.

There were about thirty rooms in the Hôtel de France and about twenty different nationalities. There was nothing "grand" about this hotel, though the loves, hates, triumphs, and failures of its patrons would have dwarfed the colourful marionettes of Miss Vicki Baum. It was an Armenian rug-peddlar who first took me to the Dôme and instructed me how to make a cup of coffee last for two hours without the waiter getting restive. (The Armenian had a stand on the Boulevard Jean Jaurès. But Jaurès has no longer a street in Paris nor

have Romain Rolland, Barbusse or Combes. And at Aix-en-Provence they renamed the street of Pierre Curie—Rue Jean Chiappe !) There I sat and watched the motley crowd: the pimps and painters, the European yogis with hair reaching to the shoulders and big red toes sticking out from their heelless sandals, the Chinese revolutionaries and Japanese spies, the spongers and journalists. It was the shop window of the world, a never-ending cinema show, more varied than any Hollywood super-colossal masterpiece. In those days I seldom went to bed before dawn because the most interesting figures appeared long after midnight. Sometimes the fringe of Foujita or the Van Dyke of Van Dongen mingled with the crowd; but on the whole the Dôme was the home of the unsuccessful, the beginner, the hopelessly hopeful. About one o'clock I could always count on an argument, conducted in bad French, with oaths and interpolations in a dozen exotic languages. No extreme modernist in art was extreme or modern enough for the Dôme; no writer who had succeeded in getting published could be talented. Everybody was interested solely in his own views and his own voice; and my precarious popularity was based on the circumstance that I was usually content to listen. Fascists and Communists proclaimed the doom of the rest of the world unless it embraced their particular creed; a hunchback dwarf, hairy and with tremendous muscles, boasted of his conquests; the seller of dirty postcards sat down and discussed Plato; and there was a thin, tall Englishman who came in at midnight, finished a dozen Pernods by 2 a.m., and left to the accompaniment of the subdued cheers of the waiters.

I thought this was Paris and it was certainly delightful. My francs melted slowly, steadily; but life between the Louvre, the Sorbonne (where I sneaked into the lectures of Bergson and others) and the Dôme was far too interesting to allow me to bother about the future. And perhaps I would have never dreamt of the existence of those other worlds in Paris and France had I not helped M. Briand into a cab one summer morning.

III

M. Briand was no relation of the great Aristide; I am sure that if they had ever met they would have quarrelled violently within two minutes. He was a very broad-shouldered, tall Frenchman with a shock of white hair, a pair of dark eyes, a

predatory beak and very shabby clothes. He came almost every evening to the Dôme and drank a good deal. He always paid for his drinks with one-franc pieces which he collected from the most unlikely hiding places. It took about five *fines* to warm him up, and then he began to talk. He had a powerful voice, and counter-arguments, interpolations, rude remarks slid off his back like water from a duck's. He was an orthodox Communist in his views, who declared that Proudhon's *La propriété c'est le vol* was far too conservative and that Soviet Russia was the nearest approach to paradise on earth. With great skill and erudition, he quoted Marx, Engels, Lassalle, and all the other hoary prophets. No one knew what he did for a living nor where his home was; about four or five o'clock in the morning he just faded away. Not that any of us were concerned with anybody else's private morals, means or social standing; such an interest would have violated the unwritten code of the Dôme.

But on the night of July 14th, while people were dancing in the streets and the French Republic celebrated a revolution it had long since repudiated, M. Briand got very drunk indeed. He talked more than ever, decrying the wickedness of the capitalistic system, denouncing in vigorous language the iniquity of those who "neither spin nor toil." By this time we, at the surrounding tables, were rather bored by his tirades, and a young American sculptor told him "to put a sock in it." But M. Briand's dark eyes gleamed with an inner fire, and while he ordered one more *fine*, he proposed a toast to Stalin, one to Voroshilov and one to Litvinov. No one drank the toast except Boulidor the hunchback dwarf, who would drink at any provocation. Then M. Briand passed out—suddenly and unexpectedly.

There was a rather pathetic look about his upturned face and slack mouth. With a somewhat conservative indignation I pondered that he must be at least sixty (an enormous age to twenty-one) and that such an old man ought to be in bed instead of snoring across a marble-topped café table. I was tired myself and decided that I should go home—but first I must see that M. Briand got safely to whatever bed he had.

It was a rash decision, for by the time I had roused him he was again in an oratorial mood and brushed aside my inquiries about his address as inconsequential interruptions. Then, while I summoned a cab, he went to sleep once more. The cab-driver, an understanding man, was under the misapprehension that I was trying to get my father home before mother came lookin

for him with a rolling-pin. It took some time to drag M. Briand to the cab, explain to its driver that it was not my sire who had suffered so badly from the effects of good cognac, and to instal the old man on the plush seat. Then we had to face the problem of where to go. I shook M. Briand into half-consciousness and shouted into his ear: "Votre address, monsieur?" At last he mumbled: "Bois de Boulogne," and pointed vaguely ahead. I remembered with some concern my depleted finances, but the mood of the Samaritan was still upon me, and so I got in beside him.

The fresh air of the Bois revived M. Briand to some extent but he behaved very strangely. He glared at the bushes and trees, he glared at me—and then made an attempt to bolt from the cab. I restrained him with great difficulty. Suddenly he leaned forward and gave some whispered instruction to the driver, who turned back a surprised face and nodded. Then my new friend drew into his corner and ignored my presence.

We turned into a side road and I guessed that we must be fairly close to Neuilly. This was a neighbourhood of expensive villas and exclusive private residences; hardly the place where an orthodox Communist would live. But perhaps he worked as a gardener or concierge in one of these houses, which might explain his bitterness against the idle rich. Still, if he was employed, his master or mistress must be extremely lenient to allow him to stay out practically all night and every night.

The cab stopped in front of an ornate iron gate and M. Briand stumbled out of it. I was counting my money, but he produced a note from the mysterious depths of his trousers and did not wait for the change. He opened the gate with a heavy key and without speaking a word to me or to the flabbergasted cabby, shambled towards the house hidden by a thick clump of trees.

The driver was staring at the hundred-franc note in his hand, I was staring at the retreating back of M. Briand. Then there was a wavering in the unsteady figure. I saw him stumble and fall, measuring his length on the gravel.

The cabman shook his head and gave a flick to his horse. Apparently he regarded the whole matter as most suspicious and did not want to lose a day's earnings by having to kick his heels at the *préfecture* as a witness in some mysterious murder or robbery. By the time I realized what was happening, the clop-clop of the hooves had died away. M. Briand was still prostrate on the drive. I tried the gate. It was not locked

and so I decided to satisfy both my curiosity and Samaritan instincts.

It took me at least fifteen minutes to drag M. Briand to the front entrance of a most attractive villa. I dumped him on the porch and sat down to recover my breath before ringing the bell. But before I could do so, the door opened and the face of a frightened manservant peeped out with a maid or two behind him. A small procession was formed and the four of us carried the still unconscious M. Briand upstairs—not to the servants' attic but into a sumptuously furnished bedroom.

I felt uncomfortable and decided to leave. But the valet or butler informed me that Monsieur was certain to ask after me when he "recovered" and would I mind waiting in the ground-floor library? Perhaps he could serve some refreshment—it was rather early but no doubt cook could prepare an omelet and a cup of chocolate.

I nodded dazedly and allowed myself to be led into a handsome room lined with book-cases and furnished with deep arm-chairs, one of the largest radiograms I had ever seen and a table covered with papers and books. There I was served with excellent food and drink and in an hour or so asked to go upstairs as the master of the house wished to speak to me.

I found M. Briand in bed, clad in scarlet pyjamas, bleary-eyed, with a wet towel around his head. He glared at me and asked:

"How much?"

I indicated that I didn't know what he meant.

"How much money do you want to keep your mouth shut?" he replied, a little more clearly.

I told him that I didn't quite see what there was to keep my mouth shut about and explained that I seldom indulged in blackmail.

He stared at me and suddenly his face, with its grey stubble, puckered and he burst into tears. It was one of the most embarrassing sights of my life. Worse than that, he began to beat his chest and sobbing, shouting, let loose a flood of self-denunciation.

"I am the lowest of the low!" he cried. "I am despicable! I believe in Marx, Lenin and Stalin—and yet I am soft and afraid. I am a good Communist in my thoughts and a rotten one in my deeds. I ought to give up all this, offer my wealth to the Party—but I am spoiled and pampered, I hate discomfort.

Spit in my face, my friend, call me the worst names you can think of—I deserve it all. . . ."

I murmured that I was sure that it was all exaggeration—and bit by bit his story came out. His father used to be a member of the Comité de Forges, that legendary body of modern robber barons and when he died, he left his large fortune to Philippe (my friend) and Auguste. Auguste was the business genius who carried on the management of the great textile mills in North France; Philippe was the *bonviveur* and æsthete who indulged—though never to excess—his cultured tastes and passions. Until one day he discovered Marx (or was it Engels?) and became a Communist. He also became a badly bewildered and unhappy man. As he told me in his first outburst, he was not courageous enough to follow the noble principles he advocated so hotly and eloquently at the Dôme. He was probably the richest Communist in the world—and always afraid that his secret, his Jekyll-and-Hyde existence would be discovered.

"It was the first time that I drank too much to get home alone," he confessed. "No one paid much attention to me ever and I could usually just slip away. But now . . ."

He put his hands on my shoulders and gazed earnestly into my eyes.

"My dear young friend, can I count on your generosity? On your discretion? I apologize for thinking that I could bribe you. You have a noble soul, I can see! You will keep the secret of Philippe Briand—of the most unhappy wretch in France!"

I promised. He pressed me to stay, to lunch with him, to accept money, but I refused all three. I was still young enough to feel sticky about accepting money I had not earned; and M. Briand the unmasked Capitalist was just as garrulous as M. Briand the pseudo-Communist. So we parted and I returned to the Hôtel de France with the conviction that there was more to this country than the little world of the Dôme . . .

IV

About a fortnight later, Szamisky the Polish painter who lived on the floor above me, came into my room and asked me whether I had any empty sardine tins.

The tenants of the Hôtel de France were constantly borrowing things from each other and I was not surprised at the request.

I confessed that I never ate sardines and then, in idle curiosity, asked the Pole why he wanted the tins.

"I want a few more to get at least a week's credit from the milkman."

At my surprised stare, he took me by the arm and led me up to his room which was very bare. But on the top of the wardrobe there was a carefully arranged row of sardine tins.

"You see?" Szamisky pointed at them with the triumphant pride of a great discoverer. "There they are. No one would suspect that they are empty. The milkman sees them and says to himself: 'M. Szamisky is a man of means. Either he has the money to buy all these sardines or the grocer considers him as a good risk.' Therefore he lets me have another week's milk and rolls on credit—and I can live."

I burst into laughter and could not stop it even when Szamisky began to splutter indignantly. He was hurt that I did not fully appreciate such a brilliant stratagem.

But not so many weeks afterwards when I changed my last hundred-franc note I began to envy the painter's astuteness. Paris seemed to be such a stupid place to starve in—a city where to my uninitiated eyes everything seemed to be light and gay. Yet I was no nearer a job than three months ago when I had arrived.

It was, however, not until I was reduced to a twenty-franc piece that I thought of turning for help to M. Briand. Perhaps he would be able to recommend me to one of his capitalist friends of whom he was so ashamed. He had not been to the Dôme for some time, but I decided to go to the villa in the Bois and discover his whereabouts.

The same night he came into the café. He gave me a conspiratorial glance, beseeching and deprecatory at the same time and I nodded to let him know that his secret was safe. For the first part of the night we had no opportunity to talk privately and I noticed with some amusement that his denunciation of the wicked rich had lost some of its vigour. But sometime after midnight there was a lull in the conversation and he beckoned to me to sit beside him.

I was trying to formulate my request and finding it rather difficult, when he slapped his forehead, and said:

"What an imbecile I am! I almost forgot! Do you know English, my friend?"

"Not much," I confessed ruefully.

"Excellent." Without any apparent reason he began to laugh. "Capital."

Seeing my bewilderment, he hastened to explain.

"I told you of my brother Auguste, didn't I? Ssh, no names here, please—you know how careful I must be. . . . Well, he's a pompous ass, always scolding me as if I were seventeen and not sixty-five. He has written to me that he wants someone to teach his workers English. Can you imagine that? He pays them starvation wages but he wants to educate their minds! Typical plutocrat! Anything except to give his exploited victims a decent living! So you don't know English?"

I repeated that I did not.

"Listen," M. Briand told me very seriously, "I am writing to-morrow to Auguste that I have found the very man for the job. He doesn't know any English himself and you can soon pick up the little you need to teach those . . ."

He broke off in some embarrassment.

"To teach those . . . comrades," he finished the sentence with a visible effort. "The salary is a thousand francs a month with full board—not too bad, eh?"

I tried to protest that I would be found out within twenty-four hours but he pooh-poohed my fears. No one was likely to know English in Roubaix and, in any case, I ought to accept because his swollen-headed brother deserved any practical joke. I thought of my empty pockets and though it was a great sacrifice to leave Paris, I realized that I would have to live. The empty sardine tins were very picturesque and ingenious, but sooner or later the milkman would stop granting credit and I would hate to cadge cups of coffee and drinks at the Dôme. And so I assented to the plot of hoisting upon M. Auguste Briand an English teacher who knew practically no English.

When I met my unsuspecting employer, I silently endorsed his brother's opinion of him. M. Auguste was pompous and he was indubitably an ass—though that did not prevent him from making several millions of francs a year cheating the government of most of his income tax and exploiting his six thousand workers, male and female, with unctuous efficiency.

Roubaix was almost as bad as any Lancashire town with its smoking mills and hundreds of tenement houses. The people spoke a harsh and unmelodious French which I could hardly understand. M. Briand spoke the same dialect, but with him

it did not matter; the more foreign I was the better fitted he thought me for the job.

It seemed that M. Briand had studied the articles in French trade papers which described the industrial methods of the great *Etats Unis*. He was much struck with the paternalism of Henry Ford, and although he was not prepared to go as far as to provide his workers with decent homes, playgrounds or folk-dancing, he thought that they could employ their leisure more profitably than in drinking *vin ordinaire*, going to the cinemas or "engaged in sexual immorality." That was the way M. Briand put it; he liked rolling phrases, rounded periods and complicated expressions. He treated me to one of his speeches rather as if I were a board-meeting. The huge expanse of his stomach was bridged by a thick golden chain and various charms and amulets hung on it. These jingled and swayed while he was venting his opinions and I watched them with fascination. Once or twice it seemed as if they would fly off the chain when he bellowed with particular emphasis.

"I want them to be happy!" he cried. "I want them to understand that in the mills of Auguste Briand there is no justification for obnoxious Red propaganda! I want them to see how wrong that wretched Blum is and that scoundrel Thorez. I am the father of my workers, yes, I know the Christian name of quite a few of them and I have been always a kind and even generous employer."

And so on, until I became dizzy watching the dangling amulets and the swinging watch-chain. But at last he let me go after impressing upon me the necessity of abstinence from alcoholic excess and a strictly impersonal relationship to my girl pupils.

Next day I entered a huge warehouse where benches and small tables had been arranged in rows and a blackboard and table placed on a dais. I felt like a fool and a criminal; after all, M. Auguste had paid me a month's salary in advance and had installed me in one of the tenement houses which he owned. About four hundred expectant faces were turned towards me. Most of them were young girls with a sprinkling of elderly men and one or two matronly women. I mounted the dais with quaking knees and bowed to my class. Then I had one of the few inspirations of my life. I left the dais, selected the prettiest girl, took her arm, led her to the platform, tweaked her pert little nose, and declared loudly:

"The nose!"

Laughter and applause greeted this distinct improvement of the Berlitz method. I turned to the blackboard and chalked up in big letters the word. Then I continued my object lesson which was interspersed with ribald comment from the audience. I almost slipped up over the difference between jaw and chin and when I tried to progress below the shoulders, my linguistic model slapped my hand. Again a delighted howl from the pupils. At the end of the lesson I made them repeat the words in a loud chorus. I prayed that M. Auguste should not turn up to inspect the methods of his English teacher, but later I learned that I had no reason for fear; he very seldom honoured his workers with a personal visit.

And so I went on, teaching English to six different classes keeping always ahead by a lesson or two and on the whole hugely enjoying myself. It was inevitable that I should make friends with some of my pupils and be drawn into their lives. For very soon they gave me to understand that they were no respecters of persons; that anybody stuck-up or stand-offish would have a very rough time indeed at their hands. Besides, I lived in one of their tenements, I earned a little more than they did, but I depended just as much on the whims and moods of M. Auguste as they did—perhaps even more for the brother of my Communist patron would have hesitated long before firing a skilled foreman, but would have kicked me out at the slightest provocation.

I found them so utterly different from my original conception of Frenchmen. They were not gay, to begin with; even their songs were slow and mournful, more like the Flemish airs than the melodies of the Midi or the impudent ditties of Montmartre. They hated M. Auguste Briand and abused him at considerable length and with a great command of invective. They did not hate him because he was rich but because he was a fool. They could have stood his meanness, but not his hypocrisy.

Madame Brucelle, with whom I boarded, had two daughters working in the Briand mills. They were pretty but pale; they spent most of their wages on dresses, though their mother severely collected a fair percentage to save enough for a suitable *dot*. Of course they were to marry decent men—independent men—shop-keepers or artisans who worked for themselves and not for any big factory owner. In the meantime they had their friends and sometimes went on a picnic; but the country around Roubaix was not very attractive and there were few places within

the town which encouraged romance. As for the young men, I drank and played cards with them. They joked at my bad French and called me " Professeur " or " Maître " with a sort of amused toleration. The older men and the married women took no notice of me; to them I would always remain the foreigner and an ally of the boss. Sometimes I went for a walk with Victorine and Louise, the Brucelle girls, but they had their regular beaux who gravely disapproved of my courting attempts. They did not mind if I came to their all-male gatherings at the *estaminet*, and they talked pretty freely in front of me, but they did not encourage any real intimacy.

They were not interested in politics, except in the questions which touched their pockets and their work. They knew much less about the statesmen and policies of other countries than their colleagues across the Channel. Some of them were members of the Communist Party, but only in a half-hearted way.

I was living quietly, saving money and becoming more and more bored with Roubaix, with the English lessons and with the weather. That winter was cold and damp, and Madame Brucelle did not believe in heating the flat properly. Winter had no business to be severe, she said, as if we were somewhere in Provence or the Côte d'Azur. The fact that winter had been damp and cold for many years did not change this belief of hers. I bought myself an oil-stove, but she banned it because she was afraid of fire.

I was wondering how much money I would have to acquire before I could give up my job when the explosion came. M. Briand had been studying trade publications once more and had discovered the Bedeaux system. The slogan of rationalization had just been let loose on the world, and it had no more enthusiastic disciple than the owner of the Briand mills.

Previously the workers had been paid a flat rate and a small bonus above a certain standard of production. Now all this was changed from one day to another. The flat rate, the basic wage was abolished and a piece-rate introduced. In a long and rather complicated circular M. Briand explained that the manipulations of machines should be standardized; that if a worker used his elbow or his knees in such and such a way, he could produce considerably more with considerably less effort, thereby increasing his earnings.

Even the foremen scratched their heads and muttered dis-

approval. The workers received the innovation with derision and scathing comment; but when at the end of the first week they saw how their wages had fallen and how impossible it was to go through the involved physical exercises which were to " simplify " their work, they became furious. They decided to send a deputation to M. Briand and ask him to reverse his decision; they were Frenchmen and not automata. But M. Briand did not receive the deputation and posted up a new proclamation threatening with instant dismissal any employee who was " sabotaging " the new system which was introduced only to their benefit.

That night I had only two pupils in my English class; one was a deaf old man who found the warm class-room a nicer place to sleep in than his own garret and the other the town idiot who had taken an embarrassing liking to me. I put the chalk down and walked out. The streets were full of uneasy crowds; small groups stood on the corners and discussed M. Briand and his scheme with bitter comments. Young men and girls walked arm-in-arm in the roadway, singing derisive lampoons which some anonymous wit had composed. These referred in most unflattering terms to M. Briand's appearance and personal habits, " dirty he-goat " being the mildest of them. But the mood of the workers was not at all ugly, and the policemen in their capes who sauntered through the crowds did not try to interfere.

As I walked towards Madame Brucelle's flat I myself was the target of a number of ironic remarks. There were allusions to the fact that M. Briand, in my person, tried to substitute English verbs for bread and considered " culture " more nourishing than meat. It was not until I reached the street in which I lodged that I noticed the stiffening of the crowd's mood. It seemed that in the main square some gendarmes had ridden into a group of girls and boys and one young woman was seriously hurt. A huge machinist with whom I had shared many a drink barred my way on the pavement and glared at me.

" Well, what do you say now ? " he shouted. " You and the likes of you are traitors to the proletariat ! *Sale étranger !* Trying to swindle us with English lessons ! Do you think that one is less hungry if one knows how to say in English, ' I haven't got enough bread ' ? "

I protested mildly, pointing out that my one thousand francs a month were not too munificent and that I had nothing to do

with Messrs. Briand and Bedeaux. But he seized my coat and declared that I was a bloody capitalist, or at least a servant of the plutocrats; unless I declared there and then that I disapproved of my employer and his despicable tricks, he would have great pleasure in breaking my neck.

I did not need such an inducement to fall in with his wishes, and some others who had joined him began to shout for a speech. They hoisted me on the stand of a fishmonger—the latter protesting hotly as I was crushing some of his wares—and I found myself making my first and last political oration.

"*Mes amis,*" I began. "I understand your indignation and share it. I, too, am a victim of capitalistic exploitation. But in your place I wouldn't stop at talking. I would *do* something about it."

I thought that was quite sufficient and climbed down to make off towards the safety of Madame Brucelle's flat. But the machinist clung to me like a long-lost brother. I was taken to the nearest brasserie, the back room of which had been transformed into a "bureau d'organisation." There I witnessed a heated discussion as to what to do. A meeting was called in one of the cinemas to decide whether to call a strike or not. While they argued over the order of the speakers, I slipped out and returned to Madame Brucelle's. I found her in tears; neither Victorine nor Louise had come home yet, and she was desperately worried about them. Although I felt little liking for going out again—it had started to rain once more with the depressing persistence of a Flemish winter—I offered that I would try and find them.

After an hour or so I discovered them safe but excited in the front ranks of a crowd which was building a bonfire in front of the locked factory gates. They were singing the Marseillaise and shouting for M. Briand to appear. But M. Briand was much too wise to show his face. He also was busy. He had decided to dismiss his six thousand workers.

It took all my persuasive powers to take Victorine and Louise home to their mother. After a hurried dinner they went out again, and I had to go with them, as Madame Brucelle seemed to think that I would be able to keep them out of danger and mischief.

I lost them early in the evening and never saw them again for three days. For an hour or so after I had gone out I was in jail with twenty-three other "ring-leaders" (more or less picked at

random from a crowd demonstrating in front of M. Briand's huge and ugly private mansion). We were kept there for two and a half days. Then, on the third morning, I was taken to the office of the police commissioner and told curtly that there had been a mistake and I was to be released as M. Briand had guaranteed my innocence. I was deeply touched by my employer's solicitude; yet when I came out of jail it was not Auguste but Philippe who received me with open arms and cries of "My poor martyr friend!"

When we went back to Madame Brucelle she informed me briefly that she was an honest woman and would have no jail-birds in her house. I was too dazed to protest, and though M. Briand (still Philippe and not Auguste) denounced her as a cowardly traitor to the cause of the workers, I had to collect my few belongings, pay my bill and leave.

In a Lille hotel to which my friend removed me presently I learned the story of those three days. After I had been picked up by the police with some of my fellow "conspirators," the rest of the workers had decided on a strike. There was some fighting in the streets; the Gardes Mobiles had routed the workers. There were three dead and about a score of wounded—and all because M. Auguste Briand had read in a trade paper about the wonderful system of M. Bedeaux.

The Leftist papers of Paris screamed of an outrage; the Rightist papers accused Stalin of having personally directed the "revolution at Roubaix." M. Philippe Briand had read the papers and felt a queer stirring in his soul. He took the train to Roubaix. He demonstrated with the workers. He was shouted at and actually received a blow on his shoulder from an *agent*. He was at last throwing off the shackles of his inhibitions, the bonds of his class consciousness. He was marching with the oppressed millions.

Then the oppressed millions made a deal with M. Auguste Briand. It was a compromise—the Bedeaux system was to be retained at very slightly increased rates. Victorine, Louise and the other girls returned to the factories. A few hundred of the more violent workers were replaced by Poles and White Russians. My employer sent me a letter in which he declared that unless I left Roubaix within twenty-four hours I would be deported as a dangerous agitator. M. Philippe Briand felt rather confused. He had heard that I was in jail and thought it his duty to bail me out. He went to his brother's house in a fine rage, but was

informed that M. Auguste could not see him. And that was the end of it.

I felt that I had had enough of France for some time. Perhaps I had acquired the same lack of audacity as the workers of Roubaix. I was better off, for I had saved a few thousand francs. M. Philippe wanted me to return to Paris. He was going to write his memoirs—the memoirs of those three glorious days when he was an active Communist. But I declined. I took a train for Brussels, and I felt a secret relief when we passed the frontier.

V

It was almost nine months since Stavisky had committed suicide in the snows of Chamonix and eight months since Albert Prince, judge of appeal, had died in circumstances which were never explained satisfactorily. The "affaire Stavisky" had rattled the French badly, and when I arrived in Paris they were still talking about it. The volley fired in the Place de la Concorde seemed to many people the starting signal for revolution; a civil war of the Croix de Feu and the Communists would disrupt France and expose her helplessly to any attack her defeated arch-enemy beyond the Rhine was planning to launch.

Paris was almost devoid of foreigners; the American tourist was still smarting under the restrictions of depression and the franc was uncomfortably dear for the sterling travellers. It was even higher for me, the son of a country whose currency had never recovered from the headlong plunge it had taken after the war. But I had made a little money in newspaper work and had fled from Hungary with a bruised spirit and a weary soul. Somewhere in France, I thought, I would find peace and contentment; the clear logic, the lucid intelligence of some of my French friends would make me forget the confusion, disappointment and grief of my recent experiences.

Somehow I felt that my first visit should be to the symbol of ancient Paris which had so little to do with the Montmartre or even the Quartier—the enchanting pile of the Nôtre Dame. I had spent many a morning in its dimmed, severely bare nave and had climbed its towers.

But when I reached it I was told that the cathedral was closed for the night; workmen were busy erecting tribunes, for next morning the Requiem of Berlioz would be presented in the old

church. Perhaps I could still get a ticket, though most of them have been given away already.

I managed to find a friend who could pull the necessary strings, and early next morning I was sitting in one of the last rows high up above the nave. Here it was even darker than at other times. I felt as if the whole cathedral was a ship sunk to the bottom of the sea—except that the glimmer of a thousand candles came from the floor far below. The church was filled with a hand-picked audience, high officers with a Maréchal of France at their head, ambassadors and ministers, cardinals and other dignitaries of the church. This glittering gathering was framed by tall columns decorated with candelabra and folded buntings of tricolour reaching to the altar. Behind its purple velvet canopy the choir was bathed in brilliant light; the canons sat in their carved chairs in richly ornamented robes as if invited to a heavenly banquet.

And then suddenly an orchestra of string and wood instruments burst into the—Marseillaise. In the first moment it sounded strange and even sacrilegous in this hallowed place. Yet all that was inspiring and majestic in the marching song of the Republic was in the lilt of the music and it swept one away. The walls which had seen eight centuries, seemed to tremble in this hurricane of sound; and yet the typical, lyric *legato* of the melody was never lost. *Forte* and *piano* alternated with striking effect; now the music grew distant, as if regiments were marching far away, now it swelled as if a company had just turned the corner—new strength, new blood, a new and young will to win rose in the notes. And I thought of the young officer at Strasbourg, composing the song which he called first "Chant de l'Armée du Rhin," but which soon became the anthem of the new republic. Had Rouget de Lisle ever heard his song played in this way?

After a short interval it was the turn of Berlioz. It took some time for ear and brain to find the right contact with his music—so much the opposite of the message of the Marseillaise. There was a purely vocal part in it, a contralto in short, even phrases like questions without answers, then voices calling, cool and clear, definite and reassuring. The dead were asleep, but from the locked cold crypts pale flowers rose towards the light. The clearer the voices called, the more swinging and lively the melody became the higher these flowers seemed to grow; and when the trumpets of Resurrection sounded, when the curtain

of heavens was rent asunder, the whole wonderful garden flamed in the breath of all-powerful life.

I thought of Berlioz, the man and the composer; both so typically Gallic. Behind his gossamer web of tones one felt the great, torturing passion which found its full satisfaction only in the highest, greatest—a passion which seemed to communicate itself to the heart of the listener through its unique music. When the melody grew jubilant and the heavenly choir of the angels mingled with the pious human voices, I felt a new strength and a new faith which had little to do with any particular religion, but a great deal with the belief in life.

Close to me there was a huddled figure—a *curé*, his face transfixed in ecstasy. His lips moved incessantly, but now he stopped his inaudible soliloquy and seemed to shrink even more into himself. A little later he began to mutter once more, until he ceased again. This is the way Catholic priests pray all over the world: the vocal prayer flexes the wings of the spirit; the inner, worldless prayer lifts it to the heights it strives to reach.

There was a whole world of form and dogma between us—for though I had been born and brought up a Catholic, I no longer shared his faith. And yet—in those minutes there was little difference between our beliefs. Both of us were carried by the same spiritual wave towards an experience which—though I could not put a name to it—was the same for both of us. Was it inspiration, divine mercy or the closeness of God? Gentle François de Sales spoke of impressions penetrating the heart like heavenly radiance, awakening everything to life in us with their warm light, inspiring our will, enlightening our mind. And I remembered Swedenborg speaking of moments when it felt as if the morning star had risen in his soul, all darkness had vanished and the difficulties, miseries, impossibilities were turned into sunny vistas of achievement.

Then a loud-speaker began to rumble. Monseigneur Verdier, Cardinal of Paris, spoke of Roman Catholic missions in French Africa. The little canvas bags of collection were jingled at the end of their long poles. The money was to serve the erection of a Cathedral at Dakar . . .

I left my seat and wandered into a wet and unfriendly Paris. When I came to the Champs Elysées, the newsboys were shouting the tragic news of King Alexander's assassination at Marseilles.

VI

Pierre Laval made his private deal with Mussolini over Abyssinia, and guaranteed the independence of Austria. He signed a mutual assistance pact with Russia, and a month or so later became Prime Minister. An old man who had known great humiliation and great glory, whose name had been the battle-cry of Zola and Anatole France, died quietly. Alfred Dreyfus had passed away before a Nazi writer published his book, proving with great erudition and unquestionable zeal that the prisoner of Devil's Island had, in fact, been guilty and that his rehabilitation had been due to international Jewish machinations. There were riots at Toulon and Brest. Paris was sultry, enveloped in a heat-wave and very uneasy.

We were staying with an old friend of mine, a textile engineer whom I had met in my Roubaix days, and who slept in the narrow hall of his one-room flat, relinquishing his one and only bed to us. The flat was in the Rue Lhomond, that narrow tributary of the Rue St. Jacques, and I duly paid a pilgrimage to the Hôtel de France, a few hundred yards away. But I found a new proprietor, and there was no trace of Pan Szamisky or my Armenian friend. The heat was almost tangible during those steely, moonless nights, and two Japanese art students—both very pretty girls—walked about practically naked in the apartment across the narrow well of the courtyard. We had our meals at the "Olympia," a small Greek restaurant where the kitchen was under the terrace and the hot steam of oily cooking was wafted up between the legs of the patrons. Young students in linen smocks, girls in thin frocks chattered at the iron tables, and the waiter called everybody by his or her Christian name. This was the Paris I had known and loved; if only it had not been so confoundedly hot! Also, my travelling companion had never been to the City of Light before, and we had to see the Cluny, the Nôtre Dame—transfigured into a white miracle in the blaze of evening spotlights—the Père Lachaise and the Louvre.

A smiling Chinaman who looked twenty and was forty-five, took us to that small Chinese restaurant where Sun Yat Sen and the others had planned the revolution of 1911. We discussed revolutions in general, and the restlessness of France in particular. The Chinaman, author of a play which had charmed and thrilled audiences in five capitals, smiled his wise and weary smile.

"The revolution has only just started," he said. "It is going to last a very long time. Nowadays revolutions cannot end quickly; there is the aeroplane and the wireless; they take men and ideas too fast everywhere. Have you ever heard of Lie Bu We? He lived three hundred years before the coming of Christ, and he wrote a book about the autumn and spring . . ."

His soft, sibilant voice became almost a sing-song; he closed his eyes while he quoted the ancient Chinese, translating it into a halting English:

"In a culture which is completely disordered, prince and servant are enemies, old age and youth kill each other, father and son bear cold hearts, brothers accuse each other, the most intimate friends work against each other, man and wife deceive each other . . . Day after day the danger increases . . . the bonds of society are loosened . . . the spirit becomes bestial . . . the greed for gain grows . . duty and common sense is forgotten . . .

"Clouds appear in the shape of dogs, horses, white swans and columns of carriages. Or they have the shape of a man in a blue garment and red head who does not move. His name is: the Heavenly Adversary . . . Or they have the shapes of a host of horses, fighting: those are called the shying horses . . .

"Snakes crawl through the town from west to east . . . Horses and cattle begin to talk, dogs and pigs mate, wolves come into the city. Men fall from the sky . . .

"When such signs appear in the land and its master does not better his ways in his fear, God shall send misfortune, sorrow and plague . . . All kinds of death, annihilation, earthquake, destruction and grief shall arrive. All this is caused by disorder in the state . . ."

He opened his eyes and smiled deprecatingly.

"I am sorry," he said. "I don't seem to be able to stop whenever I start to quote Lie Bu We. He was quite a prophet, don't you think?"

I had a meeting with another prophet next afternoon. The Congrès de Co-operation International (or something similar) had its meeting in Paris. Ernst Toller, Ignazio Silone and other Radical writers were speaking, demanding a world-wide front against Fascism and Nazism. Nine-tenths of the audience consisted of young boys and girls who applauded madly each bloodthirsty utterance, and hissed not only at the names of the dictators but also whenever a staid Liberal or Democrat was mentioned.

I sent in my card, and a few minutes later a very tall man came out of the hot crowded hall. He wore very thick spectacles and walked with a slight stoop. It was Aldous Huxley. He and I sat down at a small table in a near-by café. I told him that I had just finished translating his *Point Counter Point*. He said very little, but one of his remarks stuck in my mind a long time.

" People are, as a rule, ninety-nine per cent. pacifists—provided that they are allowed to give free vein to their revenge and hate in their particular one per cent. of selected cases. Peace, perfect peace so long as we can have the war that suits us. Ninety-nine per cent. pacifism is merely a pseudonym for militarism. Peace needs a hundred per cent. of our convictions . . ."

Years later I found the same idea in almost the same words in a chapter of *Eyeless in Gaza*, where Anthony Beavis is pondering the " resentful vehemence " of his mistress, her hate of the Nazis and her way of turning political issues into personal ones. But at that time, in the hot Paris afternoon, I wondered whether the French were not, after all, the perfect pacifists of Mr. Huxley's ideals ? They did not want to wage war on anybody—their fighting between each other was a series of mild tussles compared, for instance, with the systematic chain of assassination, kidnapping and torture with which Nazis and Communists enlivened the years of the Weimar Republic. They were pacifists—but was it because they were weary or because they were afraid ? And I thought of the Chinaman's long quotation from Lie Bu We. " Disorder in the state . . ." Well, they had rioted at Toulon and Brest, and not so long ago the unmasking of a clever but cheap crook had shaken the foundations of the Republic . . . What was the matter with these Frenchmen, compatriots of Montaigne and Voltaire, of Bergson and Anatole France ? Had they lost their lucid logic, their cheerful realism ? My country had suffered much through the harsh stiffness of Clemenceau and his successors—but what would the world be without a free France ?

I sought the answer from a Frenchman I knew ; an urbane and very self-possessed Jew, head of a large newspaper organisation. He smiled at my anxiety.

" No, *mon ami*," he said, " we are not afraid. We are just facing the facts. Our young folk are impatient, no doubt—but that is the prerogative of youth. France is the richest country in Europe ; our gold reserves are immense. Of course we, too,

are suffering from the consequences of stupidity and greed—but we can still afford to spend billions on our defence, and in two years' our great exhibition will show to the world that Paris is the centre of culture and civilization. No, my friend, have no fear for France. I have had an offer to transfer my organization to South America, to make another fortune. But I refused. My place is here. France is facing a long period of uninterrupted progress. Hitler? Sooner or later the Reichswehr will get fed up with his posturings, and send him tumbling to the gutter where he belongs. In any case, doesn't *Mein Kampf* say that Germany's path leads to the East?"

He smiled when I muttered about the Croix de Feu, the Cagoulards and provincial rioting. He insisted that I was an alarmist and so were all those journalists who published vapourings about the next war. "The people had enough of war," he said. "If any country were to declare it, the soldiers, the rank-and-file, would refuse to march. And in these days of the aeroplane, the politicians would be in the front line themselves. No, no, they would be too afraid for their own skins to risk war."

I left him in his sumptuous office in the Place de la Madeleine, and returned to the Rue Lhomond. In the afternoon we took the boat at the Pont Neuf and steamed slowly up-river. Flags were flying, a three-men-band was playing on the after-deck, and people seemed to be light-hearted and free of all anxiety.

Next day we met *l'adjutant*. He was sitting opposite us in the train to Fontainebleau, and he was smiling so frankly and ingenuously that we simply had to talk to him; we discovered that he had just returned from Morocco and that he had not seen Paris for more than five years. The world was his oyster, and he was going to enjoy it to the last drop of wine, the last kiss and the last dance. He had seen hard fighting and had been wounded by an Arab sniper, but he dismissed his martial experiences with an eloquent shrug. His face was bronzed, and on his tunic he wore four medal ribbons.

Together we strolled through the rooms of Fontainebleau, that palace of ghosts and faded *gloire*. Here, at this desk, the Corsican had signed his abdication; here, in this room, Maria Medici had plotted against Richelieu and her own son, the King. The guide droned dates and names, but *l'adjutant* made a delightful *moue* and stopped us from following the small crowd of sightseers who were mostly English, with a sprinkling of Germans and Swi

" It is musty in here," he whispered with a comic shudder. " One ought to promenade instead of gaping at the past."

Outside on the lush grass he completely forgot his dignity as an officer. I don't remember what point he wanted to illustrate when he suddenly peeled off his coat and stood on his head. Probably it was just high spirits, the ebullience of youth, the celebration of the mere fact that he was still alive while so many of his friends and comrades had died in Morocco. But when his change tumbled from his trouser's pockets, he sat down and collected the *sous* with real Breton thrift. Balancing on his haunches, he grinned at us and described a wide arc with his arm.

" This is what one dreams about out there," he said. " Green grass, well-dressed women and the laughter of playing children. Oh, it is good to come back to it."

" Are you staying now in Paris ? " I asked.

" No, worse luck," he laughed. " I am to go to the Rhine—to our so wonderful fortifications."

" Do you think there will ever be serious need for those fortifications ? "

He shrugged.

" I don't know. But every few decades Frenchmen and Germans must have a fight—I don't know why. It is like a "—he groped for the *mot juste*—" like a boxing championship in which the winner must always offer a *revanche* to the loser. Only we don't want to go on with this . . . We, Frenchmen, are a little punch-drunk."

" But haven't you a wonderful army ? "

" Wonderful ! " His eyes brightened. Then he added, in a doubtful undertone : " I wish I could say the same things about our generals, though . . ."

In the evening we sat in the crowded Coupole and watched the dancing. *L'adjutant* danced too. His red spahi's cloak was draped over the back of his empty chair. Someone brushed against it and it slipped down. I bent down to retrieve it and something fell from one of the pockets. It was a small gilt medal of St. Anthony of Padua. I put it on the table, and when its owner came back he glanced at it with a smile.

" I bought it six years ago in Padua," he said. " You know those stalls around the Cathedral ? Yes ? Then you also know the tomb of the *Santo* and that you must repeat seven times your wish behind it . . . and then it comes true. . . ."

" What was your wish ? " I asked.

" A strange one for a soldier," he laughed. " Peace. . . ."

VII

After a little more than a year, tall, scholarly Léon Blum came to a fall because France was impatient with compromise and stay-in strikes. The Chamber had passed the law of the forty-hour week ; the Hooded Men were supposed to be stamped out, the franc was devalued—but Léon Blum was too much of a philosopher to be a successful President du Conseil. Chautemps succeeded him and the Comité de Forges breathed again.

We arrived in Paris in the company of Mr. Sharp. We had travelled with him from Basle and the man was worth his weight in gold as a novelist's " copy." His weight, by the way, was considerable and his costume of a thick lumber-jack's shirt, blue corduroy trousers and a rakish béret which covered only a very small portion of his huge head was not less fantastic than his talk. Mr. Sharp was an American, a Ph.D., and by profession a statistician in the fair city of San Francisco. He was also a painter, a writer, a Communist (though he disagreed with Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Bakunin and several dozen others) and an accomplished traveller. His personal belongings occupied a small suit-case ; but what looked like a cabin trunk was filled with odds and ends he had picked up on his trip from the U.S.A. via Japan, Manchuria, Russia, Poland, Germany and Switzerland. He lifted the trunk from the rack as if it were featherweight and presented us an impromptu exhibition of his treasures. His great girth, his fuzzy black hair, his bronzed face with the very white teeth were very attractive. Five months ago he had set out from 'Frisco with the intention of arriving in time for the Paris Exhibition and now he was grumbling about the shocking fact that the opening of most pavilions had to be postponed because the workers had repeatedly gone on strike.

" But you are a Communist, aren't you ? " I asked.

" Of course I am—but these French workmen are disgusting. A good Communist loves art—and they are betraying the cause of art and culture by not finishing their jobs properly. They could go on strike afterwards . . . refuse to vacate their place of work . . . oh, there are many expedients . . . but this is really shameful ! Of course, the Russian part of the exhibition is ready."

"So is the German," I protested. "Some of the foreign countries have brought their own workers in when they saw how slowly matters were progressing. I understand that this is partly the reason for the French strikes. . . ."

"They are cowards!" thundered Mr. Sharp. "They either ought to go through with the job or walk out completely. But this bickering, this bargaining—it is unworthy of a class-conscious proletarian!"

He was less amusing and entertaining when he talked politics, so I switched him over to the discussion of the exhibition itself. He had a friend who had taken a hand in designing the American pavilion and we spoke of the prosperity Paris might expect from the influx of foreigners.

When we arrived, about two o'clock in the afternoon, Mr. Sharp sniffed the perfume of Paris just as voluptuously as I had done at my first visit. We parted at our hotel—this time the Rue Lhomond was no longer open to us as my friend had married—and he drove on to the heights of Montmartre, where he was to stay with a painter friend. But he promised to call for us in a day or two when he had paid all the visits he had planned to make for the last four years since he had been in Paris.

Our hotel was in the Rue Châteaubriand, close to the Champs Elysées and most appropriately named Atala. It boasted of a garden, a rare thing in Paris caravanserais and the mattresses on the beds were so good that my friend, a solicitor of inquiring habits, demanded to know where they had been acquired. We had a late lunch in a small restaurant off the Rue Washington and walked over to the Rue de Miromesnil to see a charming lady who conducted a literary agency in a flat furnished à la Louis Quatorze. She had a lovely black-haired secretary whose Christian name was Salome and this single fact seemed to make Paris adorable and enchanting once more.

In the evening we slipped into the *promenoir* at the Folies Bergères and I remembered the first time I had visited the world-famous museum of living flesh. I was sitting between a Lutheran vicar and a very fat Roman Catholic priest who enjoyed the spectacle far too much to be embarrassed. Alas, I had worked through the night before, sending some last-minute cables from London to Budapest, and I fell asleep in the midst of the most exciting scene of female pulchritude and manly strength.

This time it was Josephine who held the audience under her

spell and it was a well-dressed audience. It filled the bars and exchanged boisterous remarks. The Paris of the tourists seemed to have received a new lease of life from the exhibition around the Eiffel Tower. Though, of course, the exhibition was not even half-finished and visitors had to pick their way between buckets of lime and piles of planks. The Nazi building faced the Soviet's defiantly—how far and impossible the pact of two years afterwards seemed in those summer days!—Rumania, Hungary and Japan were unwilling neighbours, and in the evening the dust and heat was forgotten in the magic of the illuminated fountains, the cunning water displays and shimmering lights.

One afternoon I went to see a lonely, bitter man in his apartment a few hundred yards from the chaotic pomp and noise of the Exhibition. His flat was in a narrow, tall apartment house and he opened the door himself in a white coat and slippers. The flat was in fantastic contrast to his writings: it was ornate, with gilt chairs, glass cabinets filled with a hundred knick-knacks and crystal chandeliers.

James Joyce sat perched at the edge of an arm-chair and his pale blue eyes looked very cold behind the thick lenses of his spectacles. His stare was disconcerting; it was only much later that I read in one of his admirer's books that he was not really supercilious but rather shy, and that the fixed gaze was due to his near-blindness. We spoke about *Ulysses* which a publisher of my country planned to have translated; I had been half-promised the task and tried to display some enthusiasm for it. I mentioned that there were several Hungarian words in the original and those would hardly have the same effect in a translation into the same language. Joyce said he would supply me with Gaelic words of the same meaning; also, that he would want to supervise the translation himself with the help of some friends of his who spoke Hungarian. Then we discussed *Work in Progress* and I remarked that his last work would prove too much of a feat even for the most ingenious translator.

"Oh no," he said, mildly surprised, "eight French writers were working on it for only a year and turned out quite a good translation of almost thirty pages. . . ."

And then he said something which strangely augmented my own feelings about France and her intellectual life:

"But I don't suppose they'll ever finish it. . . . They are

all afraid of shouldering responsibility. France is doomed because her writers and artists have become frightened of the new, the revolutionary. Look at Carco . . . at Gide . . . Malraux . . . something has crept into their books—they are playing safe. You can't play safe in any sort of creation. I never did."

He launched into a description of his difficulties about the publication of *Dubliners*. It must have happened a good many years before our meeting, but he treated the whole matter as if the bitter struggle were still on. His voice rose, became almost shrill and his eyes were frostier than ever. Then he realized that he was giving away his private thoughts to a stranger and fell suddenly silent. When I left I did not remember the iniquities of the publisher, but I remembered his words about the " cowardice " of French writers and artists. I wondered whether Joyce was right and hoped that he wasn't.

The same evening Mr. Sharp called for me at the Hôtel Atala, still wearing his béret but otherwise exquisitely groomed and dressed. We went on a " café-crawl," starting with the Régence, the American and the Napolitain, dropping in at the " Closerie des Lilas " passing on to the Café de la Paix and the Rotonde—but ending up at three o'clock in the morning at the Dôme.

It was more crowded than the last time I had sat at one of its gate-legged tables, but even so it was half-empty. When we settled down close to the glass partition, a man who had been sprawling over a table in the nearest corner, raised his head for a moment and stared at us. I recognized him at once—for his was a characteristic face with its high cheekbones, broad forehead, pallid skin and proud Roman nose—but he stared at me vacantly.

" Well," I said to my companion, " you have introduced me to-night to a good many interesting people—but now it's my turn. Would you like to meet Moraine, the cameraman ? "

Sharp, too, had heard of Moraine, who was one of the best-known newsreel cameramen in the world. Moraine, by the way, was not his real name—but I think his real name is best kept out of this story. His " daring exploits " as the tabloids loved to call them, had thrilled the newspaper readers and cinemagoers of three continents. He had photographed a dozen wars and hundreds of disasters. His moving pictures or " stills " had always some unexpected angle, some daringly

original slant apart from being eminently "newsworthy." He worked first for a French company, but the Americans discovered him soon enough and he was under a long contract to one of the biggest studios. I had run into him here and there in Europe; he was a gourmet and a great lover of pretty women who followed him as if he were the modern Pied Piper.

Though he liked to eat well, have a new mistress in every country and had a fine taste in liquor, he took good care of his health and I had never known him to drink to excess. Now he looked unkempt and haggard. I thought that he might not like any intrusion on his privacy at the moment—but after all, we had been fairly good friends and if he was in trouble, I might be able to help him. So I rose and went to his table with Mr. Sharp in tow.

"Hallo, Henri," I greeted him. "I thought you were in Hollywood."

He lifted his head again, stared at me and then jumped to his feet. He embraced me stormily and almost cried on my shoulder. Then he shouted for Napoleon brandy, pumped Sharp's hand enthusiastically and declared that he had been lonely and that we were heaven-sent deliverers.

But when the drinks came and we toasted the past, his gaze strayed to the street. He seemed to be nervous and it was with an effort that he turned back to us. We talked about common friends and acquaintances, he told me a few details of the last two years of his wanderings—but again and again he glanced towards the street and his hand shook when he lifted his glass. Also, he was drinking far too much and far too quickly.

I did not like to pry into his secrets, but suddenly he put down his glass and fixed me with an unhappy, almost desperate look.

"I must tell someone," he said. "Someone who won't laugh at me—who won't disbelieve me. I tried to tell other people. It's no good. They say that I am crazy. You, Paul—you are a sensible man. Give me your verdict. And perhaps your American friend—Americans are so practical . . . he might have some suggestion. . . ."

We both assured him of our willingness to help. Once more he glanced towards the street and then began to talk hurriedly as if he were expecting interruption at any moment:

"You know I was in Africa last year? I saw a good deal

of fighting, hired a plane and took some marvellous shots, almost forgetting what cold-blooded murder I was witnessing. I had some difficulty with one side—they wanted to confiscate my negatives but in the end I succeeded in getting them out of the country. Then, on the coast, I went down with a touch of malaria. As a matter of fact it was more than a touch—for three weeks or so I lay with chattering teeth and bathed in sweat—I don't think I was conscious for the tenth of the time. I had queer hallucinations; apparently I imagined myself to be a Punic general, fighting the Romans and the Numidians, given to all sorts of barbaric habits and ancient superstitions. Then I died. At least I was convinced that I had passed away because I was seeing angels. Or rather, one angel; fair-haired, with violet eyes and the sweetest smile in heaven. She seemed to be my particular guardian angel, for I had not yet reached the Pearly Gates; I was still sweltering in Purgatory, being tweaked, pummelled and pinched by several dozen small but industrious fiends. It was all very painful and bewildering; but now and again my angel appeared and the torture lessened. She had very cool hands and her light touch seemed to chase away the maliciously grinning fiends. I wished she would stay all the time but apparently she had other duties. After all, there were many souls suffering in Purgatory and I could not expect to have an exclusive right to her ministrations. I had lost all sense of time and those weeks really seemed to me an eternity. . . ."

He paused for a new swig from the cognac bottle.

"Then one morning," he continued, "I opened my eyes and everything seemed to be normal. The fiends had vanished; I was terribly tired, but it was a pleasant, almost voluptuous weariness. The walls were white-washed and the sunshine made a fine, criss-cross pattern on the one opposite my bed. I was thinking how I should photograph it and then I fell asleep. . . ."

He lifted his head and glanced towards the entrance of the café, uneasiness, even fear on his face.

"What about your angel?" I asked to prod him on. "Did she vanish like the fiends?"

He shook his head mournfully.

"No, I saw her the very same day when my fever had left me. She came into the room and I stared at her, because I wouldn't believe that she was real. But she was. I discovered

soon enough that she worked as a nurse in the hospital; that her name was Natasha, a White Russian who had ended up on the African coast after incredible but honourable adventures."

He paused for a moment and added in a voice of almost comic gloom:

"I married her."

I didn't think that this was the time or place for congratulations, so I kept silent. But Mr. Sharp was more articulate:

"And discovered that she was not quite an angel," he suggested somewhat tactlessly.

Moraine glared at him.

"Oh yes, she is an angel," he said. "We were the happiest couple in the world. She came with me on my next two assignments and was the perfect helpmate. She learned all the dark-room work to make things easier for me. She was beautiful, tender, a good housewife . . ."

He finished fiercely:

"But she believed in reincarnation."

"I beg your pardon?" I said, startled by this unexpected intelligence.

Moraine looked at me. His eyes were bloodshot and for the first time I noticed the sagging cheeks, the small crow-feet which would soon deepen into wrinkles.

"Reincarnation," he repeated. "She got it in India. It seems she had been a Government nurse in Madras or somewhere and discovered the doctrine of reincarnation. From that moment on she was a whole-hearted disciple of the doctrine. She was a vegetarian and would only eat vegetables which had been uprooted completely as that would not cause them 'pain.' She abhorred meat; eggs she conceded, but she had grave doubts about fruit. One could never know what incarnation any human being had reached. Her parents had been killed during the Russian Revolution and she was afraid that she would suddenly be visited by an 'inspiration' telling her that her dear Papa was now a bundle of carrots or that her dear Mama had been transformed into a bunch of grapes. She was continuously visited by her inspirations. . . ."

He drank deeply and lapsed into silence.

"But surely you could have cured her of this harmless delusion?" I asked him.

"Cure her?" he repeated. "I did! I spent considerable time and money but in the end I marshalled sufficient arguments

to convince her that reincarnation in animals, vegetable or mineral matter was not only unlikely but impossible. I think my chief argument was that it would be too undignified for a human being to pay for his sins in the shape of onions or skunks. But that was only a temporary relief. True, she condescended to steaks and chicken mayonnaise with apparent relief—but she was not cured, oh no! She remembered in one of her inspirations how I had raved about the Punic Wars during my attack of malaria. Forthwith she declared that I must be the reincarnation of Hannibal or Hasdrubal—though she leaned towards Hannibal. The following months were terrible. She furnished our flat in the style of Carthage. She listened for long nights in bed whether my subconscious would emerge and supply clues as to my distant past. When nothing happened, she decided that I must have had a number of other reincarnations in between which blotted out or dimmed my memories as Hannibal. She began to hunt for clues to these reincarnations. I could not make a gesture, remark or observation which she did not analyse minutely. First I argued with her, then I became rude and threatened her with physical violence. She sighed and said that she supposed this brutality was part of one of my incarnations. She made me break appointments, refuse jobs because they would not be in keeping with one or other of my supposed reincarnations. But the worst was yet to come. One day, about six months ago, she suddenly 'realized' that her own past incarnations included Catherine the Great, Joan d'Arc and about half a dozen others. I felt like being married to a cross between a harem and a historical waxworks . . . I . . ."

He choked, glanced up and stiffened. A slight, slim, very pretty woman was coming in from the street. She was dressed simply but with ravishing elegance. She scanned the café terrace, noticed Moraine and walked up to us. The cameraman rose, muttered something and stumbled from the café, leaning on her arm.

I could have sworn that she called him "Hannibal."

VIII

How far that summer seems to be now—the last summer of reason and happiness, of unforced laughter and perfect sunshine! As if it had sunk into the limbo of a lost century,

something to be thought of with yearning and nostalgia, something to be cherished, for it would never return. Of all the epitaphs I have to write in this book not one is so bitter and difficult as the memories of that last summer before the dam burst and the gory flood swept over Europe. There is so much to remember and so much to forget lest it cause incoherent blasphemy against whatever blind god who decreed all this. . . .

Was there really a tiny place called Théoule, just ten minutes from Cannes, nestling between the wide curve of the bay and the pine-covered hills? The days were hot with a delicious heat which seemed to store sunshine in one's limbs. The nights were warm and we clambered down the rocks, along paths strewn with pine needles to a small, clear pool. It seemed stupid to wear bathing clothes and the water's touch was like a healing hand against the naked skin. An incredible moon rode high above the trees and the lights of Cannes called in vain from the distance. . . . Was there really a young man called Albert who was fair-haired and blue-eyed like a Teuton, with a torso like a Roman gladiator's, the idol of all the girls on the beach, life-guard and swimming instructor, embodiment of what the youth of France ought to have been? The music, the cheap but smooth *vin ordinaire* on the chequered tablecloth, the pretty little waitress who had a soldier husband and a baby and who collected stamps . . . did they really exist? I cannot swear to it . . . so much has happened to drown the pictures, the sounds, the smells of that last summer of peace. . . .

But every day at noon the newsboy with his bicycle and his chattering monkey arrived and brought yesterday's *Evening Standard*. Every day we vowed not to buy it and every day a black headline caught our eye in someone else's paper so that one of us had to run after the bicycle and get a copy.

It had been a portentous and uneasy year for France. The budget was the heaviest ever passed; Daladier went to Corsica and Algeria; on their way to another appeasement rendezvous, Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax had a hurried consultation with the French Premier and pro-Axis Bonnet; the *Richelieu* was launched (and did anyone in the festive crowd dream of a hot, smoky day at Oran?); honest Albert Lebrun came to London; Italian students dutifully shouted for Corsica, Tunis and Savoy; the liner *Paris* burned to the waterline at Le Hâvre, pacts were signed, decrees were passed and the *Phénix* sent up

its last air bubbles in the Indo-Chinese waters. . . . But the sand was soft at Théoule and the water bicycles great fun. There were a great many British and American visitors for the franc was once more reasonably plentiful to the pound and dollar. France refused to believe in war although workers were supposed to spend five hours more every week at their lathes and benches.

Then the headlines became larger and more hectic; the pretty little waitress had red eyes because her soldier husband would not come home on leave; some of the British visitors left and we, too, felt that we must tear ourselves away from this lotus land. One July morning we turned the car towards the Alps and Paris.

We lunched the first day at Plan-du-Var, in a cool and pleasant arbour, as cheaply and well as you could in no other country but France. We climbed up the sinuous road with its many tunnels and precipitous edges to the Colle-Saint-Michel and the Col d'Allos. The hotel at Barcelonnette which we reached in the evening was crowded but cheerful; and the young doctor who came to have a look at an inflamed index-finger of mine (the mosquitoes had been rather voracious at Théoule) would not accept any fee when he heard that my wife's sister was a doctor herself. We spoke of England, where he had studied and which he loved; of the ranting of Hitler against Poland; of Daladier and the Maginot Line. The young doctor thought that we might have war in a few years' time but not this year; the harvests had been bad, he said. And then night came, suddenly, as always among these mountains, and someone was singing a haunting, lilting melody in the garden behind the hotel. Life seemed to be very secure and yet full of some hidden restlessness. It was a long time before I could go to sleep, for my finger throbbed and my dreams were peopled with flame and wind.

We started next afternoon from the ramparts of Briançon into the distant landscape of mountain and high plateau. No one seemed to want to give us a room in this town of steep streets and sudden vistas and so we drove on until we came to a tiny place about six miles beyond it. Its name was Chantemerle and a rushing mountain stream halved it neatly. The noise of falling water was so loud that people had to raise their voices when they talked in the street. A deep freshness and coolness came from the slopes beyond the stream; the Hôtel

Téléférique was built of some resinous wood and the ceiling of our room sloped strangely, almost like a canopy.

I was very ill that night and a bit light-headed the day after. So I cannot swear that I really had that talk before going to bed in the wooden châlet of our hotel. Perhaps I dreamt it—but it must have been an exceptionally vivid dream, for even to-day, more than two years afterwards, I remember every detail.

I left my more adventurous companions to climb an inviting path on the mountain-side and sat down alone at the edge of the garrulous stream where a narrow, precarious wooden bridge spanned it. A small boy with big solemn eyes came and stared at me, decided that I did not look dangerous, and offered a grubby little paw. Then a deep voice said, "Bon soir, monsieur," and I looked up. A tall, old priest with silvery white hair and a shabby *soutane* was standing behind the rustic bench. I returned his greeting and we fell to talking easily, almost imperceptibly. The old man had been the *curé* of Chantemerle for over forty years; he had baptised, married, buried two or three generations. He was a little like the Abbé Coignard, at least that was how I sometimes imagined Anatole France's great philosopher; yet he was much more real, much less cynical and infinitely more understanding. He spoke of *mes enfants* and he had the wise and kind leniency and tolerance which very few people achieve even in extreme old age when dealing with the inconsistencies and foibles of human beings.

"Are they happy?" I asked when he had described some of his parishioners.

He pondered the question gravely.

"No," he answered after a lengthy pause. "They should be, you know. They are not as poor as they used to be, for people come to our place even in winter, when there is ski-ing in the mountains; the telpher has brought much tourism to the place. And they are near enough to Briançon to market their produce easily. But they are not happy; no Frenchman is, however gay we seem to be."

"But why, Father?" I pressed him. "You have troubles, true, but so have all other countries, and no one can take your vineyards and your natural riches from you. You have a powerful army and strong allies. You have the tradition of a great victory—a whole galaxy of victories. Wine is cheap and work not too hard. They *must* be happy!"

He shook his head sadly. "No, they are not. They have lost two things—the courage of the heart and the laughter of the unafraid. They laugh at the wrong things. And their courage is that of a man whistling in the dark—it may vanish suddenly, leaving him with his knees turned to water. The French are practical people, monsieur. They prefer to live for their country and not to die for it. And now they feel that they will have to die for it—or live in a way which isn't life."

He would not elaborate the subject; he seemed to be sunk in gloomy thoughts. We exchanged a few more desultory remarks and then he excused himself, saying that he had to attend to his breviary. I watched him cross the bridge and vanish in the shadows of the overhanging eaves. And I felt suddenly very cold; the burning of the fever had left me and I hurried back to the hotel with chattering teeth.

Next morning just below the Galibier Pass we caught up with a company of Alpine *chasseurs*. Their mules had brightly polished harness, their berets were impudently cocked and their bronzed faces very intent and serious. When we drove along them, they recognized the "G.B." plate and shouted: "Vive l'Angleterre." We called back "Vive la France!" and as the road narrowed, we fell back to let them pass. Just before the turn in the road a sudden curtain of fog drifted down. As the ranks reached it, they vanished abruptly and completely as if they had entered a cave. It was rather frightening to watch, for their singing died down at the same moment and the fog deadened all sound. These brown-skinned, broad-shouldered, smiling young men disappeared as if some Moloch had swallowed them up. I felt a strange strain and my travelling companions must have felt something similar, for they, too, fell silent. Together we stared at the vanishing army, marching doggedly towards the curtain of fog.

That was the last memory I brought away from France. Not the arcaded streets of Annecy, the breath-taking loveliness of Bourg's Eglise de Brou or that last prodigious meal we had at Calais. Soldiers marching into fog . . . without protest and without hope . . . without audacity and without laughter . . .

Two

The German soul is above all manifold, varied in its source, aggregated and superimposed, rather than actually built: this is owing to its origin. A German who would embolden himself to assert: "Two souls, alas, dwell in my breast," would make a bad guess at the truth, or, more correctly, he would come far short of the truth about the number of souls. As a people made up of the most extraordinary mingling and mixing of races, perhaps even with a preponderance of the pre-Aryan element, as the "people of the centre" in every sense of the term, the Germans are more intangible, more ample, more contradictory, more unknown, more incalculable, more surprising, and even more terrifying than other peoples are to themselves: they escape definition, and are thereby alone the despair of the French. It is characteristic of the Germans that the question: "What is German?" never dies out among them.

NIETZSCHE

Everyone who has awakened from the first dream of youth, who has considered his own experience and that of others, who has studied himself in life, in the history of the past and of his own time, and finally in the works of the great poets, will, if his judgment is not paralysed by some indelibly imprinted prejudice, certainly arrive at the conclusion that this human world is the kingdom of chance and error, which rule without mercy in great things and in small, and along with which folly and wickedness also wield the scourge. Hence it arises that everything better only struggles through with difficulty; what is noble and wise seldom attains to expression, becomes effective and claims attention, but the absurd and the perverse in the sphere of thought, the dull and tasteless in the sphere of art, the wicked and deceitful in the sphere of action, really assert a supremacy, only disturbed by short interruptions.

SCHOPENHAUER

THE LONG NIGHTMARE

I

PAUL KRANTZ lived at Steglitz, a rather dull and colourless Berlin suburb ; a German edition of Golders Green or Chiswick, with flat-blocks instead of " semi-detached desirable residences." He was seventeen or a little older ; he had a love-affair with a sixteen-year-old girl whose Christian name was Hilde. He also had a friend, a class-mate whose name I have forgotten. Paul suspected this friend of having designs on Hilde and shot him dead one afternoon, pumping into him three bullets from his father's Mauser.

He was acquitted and the whole of Berlin, perhaps the whole of Germany, went mad over his case. Endless articles in the newspapers argued over the justice or injustice of the court's findings ; meetings were held in protest and approval ; books and pamphlets were published analysing the crime and its psychological aspects. Clergymen thundered from the pulpit that German youth was depraved and that education must be handed back to the Church. Leader writers tried to discover political significance in Paul Krantz's crime, but were unable to do so. For several weeks the trial of Steglitz stayed in the headlines and one Hanover theatre produced a play based on it—but the play didn't last more than a week.

And all the while Communists and Nazis were meeting each other on dark street corners in the Wedding and the Scheunenviertel ; they raided each other's meetings, kidnapped each other, mauled, crippled, killed each other. To complicate matters, the " Carpenters of Hamburg," members of an organization which was half sect and half guild, came to Berlin in great numbers and fought a pitched battle with the pimps and " Schwere Jungens " (" heavy boys " : criminals) of the capital. Both sides used rifles, revolvers and machine-guns and the police did not dare to interfere for four days. But these protracted battles, these mass murders, this virtual state of civil war, did not claim as much space in the newspapers, demand as much attention from public opinion, as the shots fired by a precocious, unbalanced secondary schoolboy, who had started to collect sexual experience somewhat too early.

The name of Paul Krantz screamed from the front pages of the evening papers when I arrived in Berlin. It was a murky, wet, unpleasant autumn night; the neon lights on the houses resembled the rash on a fevered brow. The glass roof of the Bahnhof Friedrichstrasse glittered with opaque moisture. The taxi-cabs with their single or double rows of black-and-white checks scurried along the rain-soaked streets like beetles hurrying to find cover. I had no idea then of the gunmen lurking in empty lots, of the cabarets in the Nuernbergerstrasse, the strange, feverish, unhealthy life of this sprawling metropolis on the Spree. But I felt unwelcome and very alien—something I had never felt in any other capital I had visited.

Later I was to know so well the evenings of Berlin. The evenings . . . when the gaslight fell on the Spree canal and the water was a wicked, tempting green, a call to suicide. About that time five or six bodies were fished every week from the Spree. The windows of the barges were dimly pink in the shaded light behind them. Small yellow cars stood in front of the post offices; when the parcels and canvas bags were loaded into them, they were coupled together and hauled off with an electric motor. The red-bricked, lovely palace of Montbijou opened its doors wide and the music of Mozart, sweet and full of a mincing grace, drifted towards the Kupfergraben. In a small drinking dive students were roaring; the *Schlaraffia* or some other *Corps* was initiating a new "fox" or freshman and he had to "climb into the can," empty the big beer-mug at least twenty times an evening. The "Haus der Technik" was shining in the fluid fire of neon tubes, and the white "U" against the background of dark blue marked the entrances to the shallow tubes. The "elevated" rattled over the Gleisdreieck and the electric drills kept up an unholy racket day and night on the Alexanderplatz, where the Police Headquarters stood and around which, in the squalid, tortuous streets, the cheapest kind of female flesh was on sale.

Then and for ever afterwards Berlin was a nightmare to me—and in spite of all the beauty and age-old charm of cities like Nuremberg, Lueneburg or Munich, so was the whole of Germany. I admired their writers and musicians, worked for their newspapers and served my apprenticeship with one of their greatest theatrical producers; I made friends with young and old—but long before I became conscious of a man named Adolf Hitler, I felt the unreality of the surface, the bottomless

abyss beneath it. And I did not want to fall—yet I dreamt so often in Berlin that I was hurtling down into a canyon, endless, moist and stifling-hot. . . . I felt that Freud must be right and dreams were the warnings of the subconscious. And as these dreams never came anywhere else except in Germany, I connected the country and the subconscious experience in my mind. I never rid myself of that inhibition and the last seven years have given little cause for deliverance from it. I wonder whether many people have similar nightmares to-day in the Third Reich and what they are doing about them?

II

I had come to Berlin with the vague idea of matriculating at the University and earning a living. The first was not too difficult. After passing an elementary language test and shaking hands with His Magnificence, the Rector, I was duly enrolled as a student. In those years Berlin University was a "factory of doctorates." You could acquire a doctor's degree in stage managing, interior decoration, the study of artificial manure and dentistry. There were dozens of other degrees, granted after three or four years. The lectures were divided into "public," "private" and "most private" ones. The first category was free, but a certain minimum number of paid classes had to be chosen to obtain the necessary marks. The professors were all brilliant scholars, and some of the lectures drew audiences of several thousands. When Petersen spoke on Schiller, Dibelius on English literature, Max Herrmann on the history of the drama, it was a rare feast for the mind. Nor were the students bound by any rigid academic discipline: if they liked something the professor had said, they could express their approval by stamping their feet, while displeasure was shown by a concerted shuffling. In the immense hall multi-coloured boards covered the walls, carrying the notices of the innumerable associations, clubs and societies. The "Völkisch" Students' Brotherhood jostled here the blue-and-white of the Zionists, the chess club found itself in incongruous neighbourhood with the society for "active nudism." Every activity was highly organized and though some of these faddist unions reminded me of the German cobbler who called his shop "Schuhbesohlungsinstitut" (Institute for Shoe Soles), there was a freedom of spirit about it, a brave display of individuality

which was very attractive. Up on the top floor, beneath the rafters of the immense building which stretched between the Franz Joseph Platz and the Dorotheenstrasse, there were classes for physical exercise every morning; the heavy Medizinball thudded against naked chests and the icy cold showers left us with a pleasant tingling of physical well-being which did not fade even during the long and sometimes boring lectures. The Friedrich Wilhelm University was a self-contained world; it had spacious restaurants, its own laundry and of course a wonderful library. It even had its own theatre; across the square, close to the State Opera House which later housed the Reichstag, there was an annex of the University where a miniature stage had been rigged up and the "Theaterwissenschaftliches Institut" pursued its earnest studies of stage management and acting. Every Saturday three or four budding stage producers had to present a scene or two from a classical or modern play, using as actors the pupils of the Reinhardt School and demonstrating their theories of comedy or drama . . .

In the late afternoons or evenings the various "seminaries" or private tutorial classes had their meetings. Richardson's "Pamela" was dissected, the affinities of Arabian and Finn-Ugrian languages explored or the texts of Ulphilas minutely scrutinized. Whatever was happening outside these walls, whatever passions and crimes were gathering to overwhelm reason and intellect, here you could still find scholarship, impartiality and spiritual daring.

There were hundreds of foreign students, Japanese, Hindoos, Finns, Americans, Malayans, Negroes—every nation and every colour was represented. They all talked to each other and the House of the International Students in the Fasanenstrasse was a fascinating hunting-ground for anyone in search of unusual contacts and original information.

It was a little time before the nightmare outside those walls began to clamour for entry and swept all this away.

I could not stay in the secure haven of the university; I had to venture forth and earn a living. And as I wandered about the city, meeting dozens of people, making new contacts practically every day, I was struck by one fact; the utter disregard of Christian or even conventional morality.

We all know what Germany had passed through between 1918 and 1927. While France and Britain were recovering slowly but steadily from the ordeal of the four years of "blood

and iron," the Spartakists and the right-wing organizations fought a gory guerilla war; Rosa Luxembourg and Karl Liebknecht were murdered; the assassins of the Vehme plotted a reign of plunder and wholesale killings; Rathenau, one of the ablest brains of the Second Reich, was shot; Hitler and Ludendorff marched across the Munich square; the mark tumbled into a bottomless abyss; strikes, *putsches* and crises followed one another. No wonder that all the standards of civilization were shaken, if not destroyed. The German youth—and not only the youth—wanted to enjoy life after the orgy of death which had lasted so many years and could return at any moment. In literature and art chaos burst upon Germany; there was no madness so lunatic, no mental aberration so extreme that it could not find followers. Those were the years of dadaism and a few dozen other *isms*. Spiritual anarchy seemed to be duplicated in moral and especially sexual nihilism.

One only had to look at the bookstalls to see the fanatic expressions of this licentiousness. There were literally hundreds of periodicals—almost all of them illustrated—catering to every sexual perversity.

"The trouble with the Germans," an American newspaperman told me during my first month in Berlin, "is very simple. They take their vices just as seriously as their virtues. They organize both. There is nothing spontaneous about their sins—and that I find rather terrible."

It *was* terrible. The pederasts, the Lesbians, the believers in free love or nudism were not content with the pursuit of their particular aberration in privacy—they had to flaunt it, they had to attempt to recruit new members for their circles and societies. The homosexuals had extremely strong organizations and published long books trying to prove that every great creative genius was a pederast. Books on moral history and sexology—a few of them genuine, but most of them pure pornography under a thin coating of science—were issued by the hundred. Vice was not only highly organized and turned systematic with German thoroughness—it was also cheap. The houses in which black magic was shown were not at all exclusive or expensive. Their touts infested the first and second-rate hotels, the night-clubs and certain cafés, whispering about "peerless sensations" and "amazing attractions." But all this, vice and its surroundings, was somehow clumsy and heavy-handed; there was no wit, no charm, no light-heartedness

about it as in Paris or Italy. Germans took everything very seriously and even in sexual excesses they had to remain "tiefsinnig."

I remembered the story of the young German aristocrat who had decided that life was not worth living and that he would kill himself. But he also thought that the usual methods of suicide were too messy and unpleasant. Thereupon—it was in the eighteenth century when the "Drang nach dem Süden" had first become rampant in Germany—he went to Venice, hired one of the most luxurious casinos and locked himself up with choice food, the best wines and two luscious ladies with Titian-red hair. He planned to kill himself by food, drink and love. He did not succeed. He became very ill indeed after some weeks but death would not come. Disgusted, he resigned himself to life.

Berlin in those years was rather like the young German princeling. With great thoroughness it decided to go to the dogs—and ended up under the yoke of much more obnoxious animals.

Paul Krantz was only a single symptom of the depravity and cynicism of German youth. Perhaps all this might sound like exaggeration, but there were countless cases—most of them tragic—which all pointed to some strange kink, some mysterious perversion in the German mind. It was the same in Hamburg and other North German cities I visited. It was less flagrant in Southern Germany, but even there Nuremberg, Munich and Dresden experienced strange waves of moral anarchy which often ended in criminal courts.

The following summer I went down to Egestorf, a small village near Hamburg and one of the main centres of German nudism. Egestorf had been in the news repeatedly; Robert Laurer and Walter Brauns, the leaders of the nudist movement, had been hauled into court—not because of the large camp they had organized for the "friends of the sun," but for some of the pictures they had printed in their three periodicals and innumerable books. They were fined a few hundred marks but continued to fight the sentence in pamphlets and speeches all over the country. Once more the "martyrs of Egestorf" split the German press and public opinion as Paul Krantz had done. Laurer and Brauns accused the judges of every possible crime except arson and smuggling. The judges in turn defended themselves and brought new charges against the two nudists;

these, however, were not threshed out in court. It was a long and complicated fight which only ended when Hitler simply closed all nudist clubs and sent their leaders to a different institution—the concentration camp.

I spent two days at Egestorf and on the whole found it both tame and depressing. Mankind in the nude—especially in the more mature age groups—was not a very attractive sight. But one young man—a bronzed athlete who certainly was a living advertisement for nudism—startled me by pointing out another aspect of this " return to nature " movement.

We were lying in the soft and hot sand of the North Sea, behind us the gentle slope of the dunes and the sparse pine wood which surrounded the camp.

Jürgen—that was the young man's name—lifted himself on one elbow and kicked the sand irritably; he seemed to hesitate before he spoke.

" You are going back to Berlin to-morrow ? " he asked at last.

I nodded.

" I am leaving myself," he burst out suddenly. " I can't stand it any longer."

" Why not ? " I asked.

" It was all my uncle's idea," he explained. " He's a bachelor and has made a lot of money in sausages. I'm supposed to nurse the fat legacy he's going to bequeath to me, his only nephew. Six months ago he bought a copy of *Laughing Life*, one of the rags Laurer is publishing . . . and he went mad about nudism. He dragged me here . . . but I had enough. . . ."

" Isn't this a pleasant place then ? "

" Yes, for old goats and ancient hags who shouldn't undress even in their bathrooms. . . . But don't you see that it's poison for the young ? It kills . . . well, whatever illusions and urges we have in love. You remember that when a French deputy pleaded for the vote for women and remarked how little difference there was between male and female, the entire Chamber rose, and shouted : ' Vive la différence ! ' Well, I begin to lose my appreciation of this basic fact. . . . I am leaving to-morrow—even if my uncle disinherits me."

We travelled back to Berlin together after Messrs. Laurer and Brauns had lectured me on the blessings of nudism and burdened me with several pounds of relevant literature. I never saw Jürgen again but I hope he recovered his " illusions."

I went back to Berlin, and the American newspaperman who told me about Germans pursuing their vices seriously took me round the night clubs. One or two of them were amusing, a few quite distinguished and expensive, most of the rest just cheap, sordid imitations of the Paris "night spots." They all had mythological or semi-mythological names and about seventy-five per cent. were frequented exclusively by perverts. One of them, the "Narcissus," I was to know well enough—for at the lowest ebb of my finances I held for three weeks the proud position of doorman at it. My task was to stand in an impressive uniform (two sizes too big) at the entrance, open taxi doors and escort the guests to the entrance hall. My wages were not very munificent, but I made about twice as much in tips, especially if some of the patrons were drunk—which they often were. Women were not admitted, but about half of the male visitors came in expensive evening frocks, scented and curled, with deep décolletages and high-heeled shoes. Unfortunately (or luckily) at the end of the third week a noisy and boisterous party of students forced its way into the "Narcissus" and proceeded to wreck the place gaily but methodically. When I saw that I could do nothing to prevent the destruction it struck me as a splendid idea to join in the good work. I found great pleasure in breaking a table over the head of a mincing, rouged "lady" who screamed in a bass voice (if such a thing could be possible). When the proprietor—a swarthy ex-officer who had been cashiered for his strange tastes—fired me on the spot, I could not resist bringing another flimsy table on top of his bald head. It did him little harm, but as the Americans say, it did me "a power of good."

III

But of course Berlin and Germany was not all sex—normal or abnormal. While I was looking for work, I explored the different spheres of intellectual life and found them just as much part of the long nightmare.

I met many talented and charming men and women—but most of them had a strange twist in their brain, some blind spot or howling prejudice. They were experimenting with form and substance, running amuck in the forest of traditions and literary conventions—slashing at everybody and usually hurting themselves most in the process.

Literary life was dominated by the two immense publishing concerns of Ullstein and Scherl. Somewhere in the huge office-block of the former there was a room in which a fair-haired young man sat and stared at photographs and literary articles while his mind wandered back along the bleak corridor of years. Erich Maria Remarque was a minor sub-editor until "All Quiet . . ." burst upon an astonished world. The two mammoth publishers issued dozens of monthlies and weeklies and countless paperbacked novels. The famous S. Fischer Verlag continued its splendid policy of publishing translations of the best foreign authors and some of the best-known Germans. The Insel Verlag gave free scope to German writers of the youngest generation. No man who had a spark of talent had to go without an audience in those days. Leipzig was still the centre of the world's book trade and the traditions of the Tauchnitz-series were stoutly upheld by these pioneer disseminators of Anglo-Saxon literature on the Continent. The Propyläen Verlag—a subsidiary of Ullstein's—made the wonders of art accessible to the great masses. Its monthly, the Querschnitt (Cross-Section) was the rallying-point of the eclectics; it was the first to use juxtaposition both in word and picture to present the absurdities of mankind's posturings—with such a signal success that such excellent publications as the American *Coronet* and the English *Lilliput* were only too glad to adopt it. There were innumerable small and large firms and new periodicals appeared like mushrooms. Most of them died just as quickly; but magazines like *Velhagen and Klasing's Monatshefte* or some of the illustrated weeklies were the best in the world within their own class.

I managed to sell an article or two, a few short stories and notes to some of them, but on the whole they did not take too kindly to foreign contributors. There were too many Hungarian playwrights, composers, actors, stage producers, in Berlin—some of the more disgruntled "natives" even spoke of an "Hungarian invasion." Not that they viewed, for instance, the Austrians with any greater favour. But while editors were barely polite, one could always find a young or elderly German writer who was willing to help or advise.

A Hungarian friend of mine, a famous architect who had built most of the new Berlin theatres and about fifty other public buildings, took me one night to dine at the table of the greatest living German writer, Gerhard Hauptmann. The

old man was in his "Before Sunset" period—for the two milestones in his career were his two highly successful plays, *Before Sunrise* and *Before Sunset.* The first was the fierce and passionate protest of a rebellious soul, a cry for social justice and the right to love; the second the wise and mellow presentation of the age-old problem of an old man's love for a young girl.

There was a fairly large company present and so I felt less embarrassed in my excitement at meeting the great man. His son, Benvenuto, came up to my friend and myself, chatting with us for a few moments, and I exchanged a few conventional words with Hauptmann himself—but for the rest I was content to sit and listen.

We were called in to dinner, the old man with his splendid leonine head taking the chief place with Walther von Molo, President of the Prussian Academy of Poets on his right, and Karl Zuckmayer, the successful young playwright on his left. The soup was brought in and he was served first. We waited until he had tasted it. He sipped a spoonful and then paused. From an expression of vague benevolence his face changed to register strongest disapproval. He put down the spoon and we all waited breathlessly.

"I am," he said, "according to some critics the greatest living German writer. I have published about eighty books. I have been awarded the Nobel Prize. Some of my plays were performed in twenty-nine languages . . . But there is one thing I haven't achieved and never will. I cannot get my cook to make decent pea-soup. . . ."

This was a bit of an anti-climax. But there were a great many other German writers with whom I made personal contact without feeling disappointment. I had a long and violent argument with Arnolt Bronnen in his flat at Wilmersdorf; he was one of the first German writers to feel sympathy with the Nazis, as his main bugbear was what he called "the Jewish domination of German literature." Yet when I asked him who represented the best in the literary world of the Republic, he mentioned such extremists as Georg Kaiser, Bert Brecht, Döblin, Benn and Remarque. "We German writers," he said, "are heartily fed up with the hegemony of Jewish and snobbish literary cliques. And not only the writers—all decent people in the land." This remark was rather significant in view of the fact that Bronnen himself was a non-Aryan.

It was in Berlin that I met for the first time Jakob Wasser-

mann, the novelist who had created such an astonishing world of fiction from Christian Wahnschaffe to Etzel Andergast and Dr. Kerkhoven. He was an intensely shy man who bore his fame like a crown of thorns. I plucked up sufficient courage to wait for and accost him after a lecture; he took me to his hotel and we spent most of the night talking. He had the habit of discussing whatever central problem was occupying his mind with anybody and everybody. In those years, while the great novel of "The Mauritius case" was slowly maturing in him, it was justice, the possibility, nature and limitation of human right and wrong which engaged him more than anything else. And so, on the third floor of the Hôtel Adlon, we talked about judges, trials, the psychological imponderabilia of criminals; of the responsibilities accuser and defender shouldered from the first moment of a case. He also spoke about the "courtesy of the heart" which he considered the most important thing in human relations. Behind his shyness there was a well-controlled bitterness and a tremendous desire to be articulate. When we parted—almost at dawn—he asked me to visit him at his Austrian retreat in the village of Alt-Aussee.

It was only two years later that I could take advantage of his invitation. Wassermann was a changed man—more bitter, abrupt and almost a nervous wreck. It was years afterwards that I discovered that in *The Third Life of Dr. Kerkhoven* he had more or less described his own predicament. He had married an intensely possessive woman who was bitten with the bug of litigation. He discovered his mistake too late when he met his second wife, a charming and talented woman, sister of a very well-known Austrian actor. His first wife made things very difficult for him and when later I sold some of Wassermann's translation rights in Hungary, the money had to be paid to five or six different people. He died an unhappy man and almost a poor one.

Wassermann was almost at the end of his arduous career (he had been born in the poorest Jewish quarter of Furth, and had starved for many years before he had achieved success), but the young man whom I encountered one day in the office of the Rowohlt Verlag was just at the beginning of his. He was just as shy and taciturn at first as the author of *Renate Fuchs* and *Caspar Hauser*, but when burly, booming Ernst Rowohlt introduced us and told him that I would translate his two books into my own language, he thawed to my sincere

appreciation. For this was Johann Rabener, a boy of twenty-two, who had written two novels—each of more than two hundred thousand words—and had achieved a great popular and critical success with them.

His thick bifocals hid large, limpid dark eyes; his chin was rounded, his lips sensitive and sensuous. His thick hair was wavy above a domed forehead. His books were strange and terrible for a twenty-two-year-old. They told of incest and murder, of the breaking of young hearts and two lovers who lay down on the cool tracks to await the thundering night express. His master was Dostoevsky, but there was no message of hope, of Christian love in his books—only a burning pity for the stumbling, bewildered, doomed animal Man. *Sentenced to Life* was one of his titles and the other *For I was a Human Being* . . . And his life itself was a perfect summary of German youth in the late nineteen-twenties. I tried to get some details out of him and he spoke in odd, jerky sentences:

"I have tried at least seven different professions. I worked in an artificial silk factory. Then in a bank. I was a salesman for advertisements . . . a language teacher . . . wrote a column on sports for a cheap weekly . . . had a job with a wholesaler of paper . . . then I was a photographer. I wandered over half Europe, but I lived most of my life in Berlin. . . . I think, our generation has a much larger circle of experience than any one of the earlier ones . . . I have collected some of these experiences—and they amounted to half a million words . . ."

"But why are your books so desperate?" I asked.

"I don't think they are," he replied, a little less tongue-tied now. "I think my courage was rather desperate—after all, I was a complete outsider and yet I risked a year of starvation to write my first book. When someone asked me what it really wanted to express, I answered that its *leitmotif* was the pity towards suffering . . . the contrast between the ideals of life and reality. The mother of Feodor Feuerhahn, my hero, was the embodiment of all the satanic dissolution of the inflation years. But I thought that in shaping chaos, chaos was defeated and purified. . . ."

Rabener was a Jew and when the Nazis came to power he had to fly for his life. His books were burned with many others. The last I heard of him was from Palestine. He has not published a new book in the past twelve years. . . .

There were many other young and elderly German writers whom I met in Berlin and in other German cities. Bert Brecht whose German version of the *Beggar's Opera* was a scathing indictment of the dying social order; Walter Hasenclever who mixed blasphemy with an almost Protean imagination; Wilhelm Speyer who wrote the best books about boys and animals in those years; Erich Kästner whose *Emil und die Detektive* was in such a strange contrast with his bitter, cynically sentimental poetry and who, by some strange mental acrobatics, succeeded in making his peace with the Nazis; Hans Fallada who was reputed to be the son of a millionaire but preferred to write about little men of the lower middle classes and gnarled peasants clinging to the meagre soil of northernmost Germany; Hans Meisel whose *Torstenson* was the story of a Baltic kingdom and a royal brother and sister, united in tragic, incestuous love, the story of a dictator whom dictatorship made unhappy; Gerhard Menzel, whose drama *Toboggan* won the Kleist prize, and who lived by running a small cinema and pounding the piano himself to accompany the silent films—and innumerable others, lesser and greater. They were all restless, whether they had achieved success or not; they resembled sleepwalkers, conscious of walking at the edge of a precipice and afraid to wake up.

IV

It was not a very pleasant winter in Berlin; although I went the round of the editors and talked to writers and journalists by the dozen, I hardly made any money. I had taken a room in the Grosse Hamburgerstrasse, in Berlin's East End (only it's called the Far North). My landlord was deaf, my landlady almost blind; genteel people, living on a small pension and the bounty of a son in the merchant marine. The tall, narrow tenement house was built in the courtyard of a church and whenever I went home late at night I had to carry an immense wrought-iron key to open the gate of the churchyard, another, slightly smaller one, to get into the house and finally my latch-key. My room had a tiny balcony from which I could see a cemetery and a kindergarten; on a cold and dull winter morning this fact seemed deeply symbolic to me while I rubbed my numbed fingers and racked my brain to find some idea which would "sell." Unfortunately I have forgotten what that symbolic meaning was. . . .

The Dittmars depended on the rent of their spare room to keep going and I preferred to skip a meal or two every day to not paying my rent. I earned some money by loading apples and other fruit from the barges which came up every day at dawn on the Spree, but the work was very hard and very badly paid, my fellow-toilers were rough and tough customers who did not like my " aristocratic manners." (I didn't chew tobacco and I couldn't swear fluently in Berlin cockney. I was an outsider who used a handkerchief. Sufficient reasons for complete ostracism.) One morning a twenty-stone man lounged against me as if he had lost his balance—I did, and fell into the water. I continued to work after I had climbed from the icy muck of the canal until my clothes froze. The result was a bad bout of 'flu ; my debts mounted and in the end I had to move out. That was the time when I took the job with the " Narcissus " and saw some of Berlin's night life " in the raw."

When I was fired from my strange post, I had a little money saved and went back to the University. I called on Max Herrmann, the head of the " Theaterwissenschaftliches Institut " to which I had paid my subscription early in the autumn, in my affluent days ; I told him about my difficulties. He had been rather lenient to my fumbling attempts of producing, on the miniature stage of the institute, one or two scenes of *The Tragedy of Man*, a Hungarian equivalent of *Faust*, and said that he would try and speak to one of his producer friends—perhaps they could give me a job as an extra.

The theatre in Berlin was at the zenith of its brilliant post-war period. Reinhardt had two or three theatres and every performance was a unique experience. I remember attending the first night of *Widowers' Houses* ; I don't know whether G.B.S. has ever seen the team of Hans Brausewetter, Grete Mosheim, Jakob Tiedtke and the others ; from Cokane to Lickcheese it was a perfect cast and behind the single instruments of the players one felt the hand of the invisible conductor, perhaps the greatest the theatre ever possessed. But there were a great many others. Karlheinz Martin, a wiry bantam of a man, a bundle of electrified nerves who bullied his players into a harmonious unity while giving free vein to their individuality, had just staged *Rose Berndt*, the moving peasant tragedy of Hauptmann. Piscator, that somewhat mysterious and erratic genius, was presiding over the Theater am Nollendorfplatz where he had built a crazy and utopian stage, a stage which

could move in every conceivable direction. On both sides he placed long and narrow screens on which he projected fragments of news-reels to frame his "*Inszenierung*" of a play on Rasputin. Paul Wegener, the beetle-browed, Tartar-faced star, swaggered and roared through the drama which lasted almost five hours. There was Jessner who ran the "Volksbühne" where almost every seat had a subscriber—and almost all of these were working people. Professor Robert, a Hungarian, managed at one time five or six theatres, produced many English and American masterpieces, and shocked Munich by presenting a Wedekind play in which a lady appeared in almost a complete state of nudity. But not only in Berlin, in almost every fair-sized town there was at least one good repertory theatre with half a dozen talented players and one or two good producers. Of course, there were cheapjacks and shameless caterers to the lowest taste; there was an attempt by some financiers to exploit what seemed to be the golden age of the German stage; there were ticket bureaus, moneylenders, leasers of cloak-rooms and bars who demanded a share in the spiritual direction of the theatres which they supplied with money; there was a lawyer who bought buildings and leased them to repertory companies with the understanding that he would have all the revenue from the sale of sausages and the use of the lavatories—but on the whole a good play was always sure to find a producer, a fair cast and an appreciative audience.

The actors and actresses of the late twenties were perhaps the best Germany had ever produced. Elizabeth Bergner, Emil Jannings, Albert Bassermann, Käte Dorsch, Max Pallenberg, Curt Bois and dozens of others shone brightly on the theatrical firmament. Their private lives were not always blameless—some, like Maria Orska, faded into the nightmare world of drugs and dark cults—but their art was impeccable.

Max Herrmann kept his promise and I obtained a number of small jobs which kept me going for almost a year. The first was that of a "Stallwächter," literally "stable-guard," a sort of glorified call-boy in a production at the Lessingtheater. My task was to call the actors at the right moment, to run errands for them and to watch the performance from beginning to end in case any unforeseen emergency occurred. It was arduous and rather boring work and by the end of the first fortnight I knew every single word of the play by heart. But at the same time it gave me a welcome opportunity to watch

the rich, ribald and multi-coloured life backstage and to rob me of some of my illusions about the great stars.

Once we put on a " classic " for a matinée. Emil Jannings was to play the leading part. We had only two rehearsals. Jannings arrived in a vile temper; everybody tried to keep at a safe distance from him. But the explosion could not be avoided; he decided that some stage-hands were talking too loudly and probably sneering at him behind the scenes. He blasted them in no uncertain terms; but there was at least one self-respecting Social Democrat among them who protested against such high-handed treatment. Thereupon Jannings smacked his face. The old stage-hand turned white but did not say or do anything. He just walked away and Jannings, having let off steam, went on with the rehearsal.

One of the finest scenes in the play ended with the great actor crying out in righteous indignation: " I cannot stay any longer in this den of iniquity! " and rushing out from the stage. It was always sure to " bring down the house," and Jannings enjoyed doing it.

The same afternoon he cried out again:

" I cannot stay any longer in this den of iniquity! " and rushed from the stage. Or, rather, he attempted to. For the door against which he hurled himself would not yield. He tried another—there were three exits from the Knight's Hall in which this act was set—but that, too, was barred. Once more he cried to high heaven that he could remain here no longer, and once more he was baulked in his stormy exit.

He turned round and glowered at the audience. He had good reason, too—for the audience was rolling with laughter. The curtain had to be lowered, the performance abandoned, but outside the vast crowd was still in the throes of helpless mirth.

Of course, there was a " court martial," but the mates of the stagehand all lied loyally. There was no evidence that it was any particular man who " forgot " to turn the small wooden bars which locked the exits of the set when it was lowered or raised on the stage. Jannings wanted to cancel the rest of the performances, but his contract was watertight and the theatre threatened to sue him for a considerable sum if he broke it.

To my best knowledge he never again tried to slap a stagehand.

Another great actor who came to grief on the stage while I was " stable-guard " was Paul Wegener, whose performance as

Rasputin I have already mentioned. He was a great artist, but extremely stubborn in his conceptions ; once he had worked out the " business " in a play he would stick to it whenever he acted the part.

One of his famous rôles was " Wallenstein," the great general of the Thirty Years' War, whom the Viennese cabal of courtiers had had assassinated. There was a scene in the play when Wegener was alone in his tent, and for a full minute or so nothing happened except that he put on his gloves—some enormous gauntlets. But he managed to infuse this trivial act with such a sense of dramatic tension that his subsequent exit was always greeted by enthusiastic applause.

That disastrous afternoon Wegener was preparing for the usual " business." He pulled on his left glove. Then he discovered that the other glove was also for the left hand. A less stubborn and less self-assured actor would have simply given up the whole thing. Not so Wegener. He looked around for the right-hand glove. He could not find it. He slammed the wrong gauntlet on the camp table standing in the middle of the stage. He looked around once more. There was a subdued tittering in the audience, but as Wegener's quest was continued it swelled into a roar of merriment. For *they* had all seen the right-hand glove. It was lying on the floor. Wegener had picked up three gauntlets and dropped one. Now he made a not too dignified exit and the curtain descended for half an hour's interval ; it took a long time before the playgoers were restored to sobriety and forgot the ridiculous incident.

My " stable-guard " job came to an end, but almost immediately I got another position. This time it was with a producer who intended to stage the " most stupendous revue " ever seen in Berlin. It was *Madame Pompadour*, and the largest circus in the German capital was leased for it. There was to be a chorus of a hundred and fifty lovelies, and a hectic week was spent in picking them out from about twelve hundred applicants. These had to parade in nothing but a G-string (I think that is the name of the diminutive garment which Miss Gipsy Rose Lee retains at the end of her strip-tease act), and were inspected by five connoisseurs of female pulchritude. I had no qualifications to sit on such a jury, yet I did. My task was to take the measurements of the selected ladies and to jot down their names and addresses. I hope I won't be disbelieved when I declare that it was the ghastliest week of my life. The first hundred

or so of all but naked glamour girls were certainly a thrilling sight. But as the Lottes, Minnes, Kætes, Susis and Renates paraded in ever-thickening swarms, the interest wandered and waned. On the third day I was already slightly dazed and felt like my friend Jürgen—that I never wanted to look on femininity in the nude again. But on they came, relentlessly, in never-ending multitudes from ten in the morning until midnight. Even the seasoned and hardened producer who presided with a big cigar in his mouth and a " dead-pan " expression became a little jaded. And at the end of the week, though there were still a few hundred applicants left, we closed the recruiting—not because we had picked the loveliest girls in Germany, but because we could not bear it any longer. For months afterwards I was haunted by the nightmare of having to endure once more the parade of show-girls.

The revue was a great success, but I soon moved on to another production—this time Frank Wedekind's *Schloss Wetterstein.* It was a morbid and macabre drama ; only that strange and tortured brain could have devised it—a brain which always teetered on the edge of insanity. Kaffka, Wedekind, Kokoschka, Georg Gross and a few others represented in literature and art the nightmarish negation of life and adoration of death which was so characteristic of German minds in the nineteen-twenties. When Fritz Kortner, playing the queer South American multi-millionaire whose mistresses always committed suicide after the first night they spent with him, made his entrance, an elderly woman in the stalls fainted—before the actor had opened his mouth or made a single gesture. I do not remember who else was in the cast, but it was a thrilling performance ; as if all the players had been possessed by some primeval spirit of sensuality, deathseeking, barren and abysmal.

I had only occasional glimpses of the Alice in Wonderland world of Neu Babelsberg and the other large studios in which German films were turned out by the dozen. Herr Hugenberg, who had quite a share in making Hitler Chancellor of the Reich, controlled the U.F.A. and most of the subsidiary film studios, just as he had gained control—by not too scrupulous means—of Scherl and other large publishing firms. But Fritz Lang, Ernst Lubitsch, Erich Pommer, Joseph von Sternberg and the others were experimenting with daring subjects and treatments ; Jannings, Wegener, Marlene Dietrich, Lia von Putty and Conrad Veidt were in the first rank of cinema actors. The wild days of

Caligari and surrealistic or futuristic films had ended ; the talkies were in their infancy, but already the Tobis Klangfilm was making experiments and perfecting apparatus. Soon *Atlantic*, in which a young man called Willy Forst appeared in his first part, would reach the cinema. Willy Fritsch, the German Rudolf Valentino, would charm susceptible feminine hearts all over the world and Gustav Fröhlich would earn his first laurels. Fröhlich later married a Hungarian soprano, Gitta Alpar, divorced her when she turned out to be non-Aryan, got entangled with Lyda Baarova, a lovely Czech star, and had a most undignified brawl with Dr. Goebbels, who cast covetous eyes on Lyda. Surprisingly enough, Fröhlich got the best of the dispute—for at the date of writing these lines he is still appearing in German pictures while the wily doctor nursed both a black eye and a broken heart. But all this, with fantastic embellishments, has been told *ad nauseam* in all those books which profess to give the " inside dope " on Nazi Germany.

Though not to the same extent as in Vienna and Budapest, a large part of literary and artistic life surged through and centred in the cafés. I frequented two—the Romanisches, called Café Grössenwahn (Megalomania), in which Rupert Brooke had yearned for April in England, and the somewhat staider Café Hessler. It was in the Hessler that the eccentric Hanussen presided over a long table of sycophants ; he was making forty thousand marks a month for " mind-reading " at the Scala or the Wintergarten, he was " official astrologer " to the Nazi party and carried on a bitter feud with Dr. Goebbels. That feud (and knowing too much about Hitler's past) was to take him in the end to a lonely pine copse on the outskirts of Berlin, where his maimed body was found only after many days. . . .

Sometimes there was good talk in the cafés ; and sometimes encounters and incidents which supplied the gossip columns and scandal sheets with plenty of material. I watched the famous movie star boxing the ears of the equally famous cartoonist because the latter had accused him of homosexuality. I saw the celebrated tenor walk into the big room with the many mirrors, bronzed, fit-looking—and I knew he had spent the last three months in a wheel-chair (as he did every year) trying to get cured at one of the Czech health resorts, achieving always a sort of semi-cure which carried him through the rest of the year, but led unavoidably to a collapse at the end of it. I attended a " meeting " of some choice spirits who wished to found a new,

newer or newest review to debunk all the former ones. The cafés were divided into " Stammtische " around which practically the same company gathered every day and every night; there was no need to give any orders to the waiter, as he knew whether you liked your coffee black or white, in a glass or a cup, with or without sugar, hot or cold. Little actresses ogled fat producers as they do all over the world; long-haired poets tried to sell their masterpieces to sceptical editors; bookmakers figured the chances of the next race; people dreamed and laughed, loved and battled behind the huge plate-glass windows, while outside the long nightmare drew towards a new chapter.

V

Somehow I felt that this motley crowd of writers, artists, actors, university students, perverts and prostitutes did not represent the real Germany—that, apart from political agitators, cranks, criminals and mountebanks, there must be a multitude of simple, decent people. They represented the " Transition Republic," struggling with many difficulties, fighting many enemies, but still striving to create happiness and share it among the greatest number of Germans. The Weimar Republic was ineffective, weak, fumbling, sometimes criminally foolish—but never in the history of Germany, certainly not under the Kaiser, was there such freedom of opinion, such stirring of the spirit as in the years when Ebert, the saddler's mate, was President. Hundreds of political and economic blunders could be brought home to him and his Chancellors; no one in his right mind could suggest that their methods and plans should be adopted for the post-Hitler Germany—yet people could think, talk, breathe freely and were at a reasonable liberty to bash in each other's heads in case of non-agreement. Their " black record " was not the blackness of the heart, but rather a " black-out " of judgment and perception.

A Hungarian friend of mine who managed the Berlin office of a large Budapest export firm introduced me to a young couple named Moeller. He was about thirty-five, she seven years younger. They lived in a small flat in Friedenau and had a pleasant habit of " adopting " a foreigner, student or intellectual, who felt lonely in Berlin. Their mental appetite was insatiable; they wanted to know and learn so many things and their only complaint was that life seemed so short to explore and discover

all the beauty and wisdom of the world. Herr Moeller, with his two brothers, ran the Berlin office of a big shipping line ; as he was the junior partner, he did not earn very much, yet they lived comfortably. He was tall, fair-haired, with a brown, healthy skin, a fair moustache and an athlete's body. He had served in the German Navy during the war and held a merchant skipper's ticket. Frau Moeller—Susi—was tall, with a crown of heavy brown hair, very blue eyes and a skin which did not like powder or rouge. Their first child, a baby girl, had died when she was barely a year old, and though the tragedy had shaken them badly and perhaps explained their craving for companionship, they were able to talk of the loss and explain that times were too uncertain to bring a child into the world just now.

Of the two the woman was the more nimble-witted and possessed the wider culture. Herr Moeller was very proud of his wife's intellectual achievements and confessed with a smile that he was just a " Philistine," trying to plod after her—but he was just as keen on music, good books, visits to art galleries and cheap foreign trips as Frau Susi herself.

They read the modern, extremist writers and analysed them with understanding—yet they did not like them at all. Their poetry was that of Detlev von Liliencron, the Junker who sang of the charge at Gravelotte and for whom a stolen kiss and a sabre duel were equally romantic ; or Börries, Freiherr von Muenchhausen, who went back to folklore and ancient history for his subjects. They were able to talk at great length and with great enthusiasm about Kleist whom they considered the best German dramatist, of higher stature than Goethe or Schiller. In art the cathedral of Bamberg, the Hanseatic charm of Lueneburg, the mysterious smile of Nefretete, the painstaking detail of Memling and the graphic genius of Duerer were their chief standards against which they measured everybody else—whether it was Picasso or Renoir. But in music they were ready for any daring experiment. Frau Moeller played the piano and her husband was a passable violinist ; together they explored the works of Krenek and Schönberg, Bartók and Sibelius, Kodály and Gershwin. Of course they preferred the " Wohltemperiertes Klavier " or the Schumann sonatas ; but when I brought a young Hungarian composer along, we had musical evenings of rare enjoyment and variety.

They both hated war and would not talk about it. They also

were aware that things were wrong and could not go on much longer; but they smiled at the name of Hitler and maintained that the Nazis could not come into power as long as the counterbalance of Communists existed in Germany. Both were a-political beings and wrapped up in the things of the spirit.

On Sundays we went for long walks, tramping over the Brandenburg woods which, despite their general flatness, have a peculiar beauty. Along the innumerable lakes, rivers and canals we hiked, spreading our picnic lunch on soft pine needles, talking or content with a companionable silence. We walked miles in the rain, enjoying its fierce and yet soft hammering on our hair and faces. We walked in the snow when the deer crowded the half-covered corrals in which food had been provided for them. In summer and spring we paddled for many miles in a collapsible boat which the Moellers had built themselves and which could be carried comfortably in a rucksack. In the evenings we went back to the Friedenau flat and had a cold supper—a little meat and a great deal of green salad—with a *Maibowle*, a drink of the gods, to wash it off. Then, late at night, I would take the last bus back to the Grosse Hamburgerstrasse or later, in more affluent days, to Wilmersdorf. If I did not turn up three or four days running, Herr Moeller was sure to ring me up and chide me for my "breach of faith." Sometimes we went to museums or art galleries, sometimes—though more rarely—to a theatre or a concert. I was much younger than both of them, yet in their company I felt completely at ease and at home.

Later I met another, totally different couple. Old Dr. Schweitzer was in his late sixties; his wife about fifteen years younger. They were Jews and lived in a big, comfortable, pleasantly crowded flat on the outskirts of one of the poorest Berlin districts. Dr. Schweitzer was a panel doctor, which meant that his practice consisted mainly of very poor patients; but he also was the family physician of rich Jewish families. He had no compunction about overcharging the latter in order to give free medicine and frequently substantial loans to the former. They all adored him, and he was like a modern Æsculapius, with his white hair and goatee, his wrinkled suit and wise smile. Mrs. Schweitzer was a music teacher and a pianist of some repute. Their life was touched by tragedy through the fate of their daughter, who married another doctor and lost her mind after a miscarriage. She was in a private asylum, well looked after,

but considered to be incurable. They seldom spoke of her, though the son-in-law had his surgery in the same house where they lived and often took his meals with them.

They had travelled widely, they both read a great deal and music was an integral part of their lives. The old doctor sometimes read papers to some medical society; his speciality was rheumatism and he had been trying to develop a new cure for many years. They were a little shocked at the growing anti-Semitism which did not touch them personally, but which echoed in many complaints Dr. Schweitzer heard in his consulting-room. They were talking of transferring part of their fortune to Palestine—" just to be on the safe side "—but in the end always postponed doing it. They were both intensely proud of German cultural and technical achievements, and two of the kindest, simplest-hearted people I had ever met.

VI

About eighteen months after I had left Berlin and Germany for the first time, I landed in Hamburg from a Swedish freighter. I had made friends on the trip from Stockholm with the first mate, and he promised to show me " life in the raw " in notorious St. Pauli. And life was certainly crude and raw in Hamburg's red-light district, a vast town of brothels, cheap cabarets, dancing-halls and low-class dives. The night I spent in the crooked streets and garishly decorated amusement places was an integral part of the " long-nightmare," and I was more than grateful that the six-feet-four Swedish sailor was at my side with his ham-like fists and broad shoulders.

The entrance to St. Pauli is close to the Michaeliskirche, a most dignified though rather stolid piece of Hanseatic architecture. The main thoroughfare, the Reeperbahn, was an indescribable jumble of colours, races, nationalities. Right at the beginning of it was the Dance Hall Trichter, where girls stood in groups outside, begging the sailors to take them in. For the rule of the " Trichter " forbade the entrance of unaccompanied " ladies " and as it was one of the most profitable hunting-grounds for prostitutes, some of them were even willing to pay for their escorts. Inside they quickly separated from the less promising swain to look for more prosperous " *Freier.*"

Next to the " Trichter " was the wax-works with a section " forbidden to adolescents." The third attraction was the

" Plastikon of Beauty," a sad travesty of the word as poor, hungry girls displayed in it their rather indifferent charms without the slightest attempt at artistry. Another " artistic embellishment ", was the " House of Photographs," almost completely dark inside, where slot-machines were equipped with rather gruesome pictures of far too ample ladies in the altogether. This establishment was mainly frequented by schoolboys in the pimply stage of adolescence.

The " Reeperbahn " was also the main cruising place of street-walkers. Some of them were about thirteen and some old hags. Their wooing was shameless and over-persistent. Cafés, cheap music-halls, bars, *hotels garnis* lined the broad thoroughfare. A huge barn-like structure was filled with swings and slides. The prostitutes were of many lands and colours ; a great many French and Italian, whose dark charms seemed to have a special fascination for " Nordic " seamen. But the " Reeperbahn " was a kindergarten compared with the pitch-dark streets and alleys surrounding it. My Swedish friend was careful to explain that he only ventured into these places because he had acquired the art of jiu-jitsu and also carried a gun.

We looked into one or two gambling dens, though we did not stay long. Cardsharping had been brought to a high perfection in these places. The dark alleys off the Reeperbahn housed the pimps who had their regular guilds ; into these " Kaschemmen " the prostitutes came to " render account " of their earnings. The criminals and pimps had their own " security service," their guards at the street corners signalling the approach of anyone " suspicious " or promising good booty. One of the worst dives was the " Lighthouse," the headquarters of the pederasts, where men met in the most repulsive surroundings.

Farther on, in the Peter and Marienstrasse, there were the big and luxurious brothels like the Seeligmann house, where the maddest orgies took place and the prettiest girls were for sale.

It was a sightseeing tour which left me heavy-eyed and with a bitter taste. It was all so " commercial," crude and matter-of-fact. The trappings of sex were garish and at the same time pitiful.

I told my Swede that I had had enough, and we retraced our steps along the crooked, cobbled streets. Suddenly a figure loomed up in the murky night and, swaying, stumbled against me. Before I had time to act, my companion had grabbed the

practically invisible man and sent him crashing to the ground. Then he took my arm and forced me to run.

We did not stop until we reached the iron gates of the brothel street with its strange ornaments of miniature Doric temples. I asked him, panting:

"What was that for?"

"Never stop to argue," he answered. "He might have been drunk or he might have been after your wallet. That's their favourite game—bumping into you, picking a quarrel, and then knocking you out or knifing you. They're very handy with a knife," he added thoughtfully. "I hope you have still got your wallet."

I had—but from that moment I held on to it like grim death.

Outside the gates a man in a choker collar and a woman dressed in a severely-cut long black dress were distributing leaflets. Bold black letters screamed:

WHAT BRINGS YOU TO THIS PLACE?
DO YOU SEEK SATISFACTION OF YOUR SEXUAL INSTINCTS?
ARE YOU FOLLOWING YOUR SENSUAL EXCITEMENT?
DO YOU KNOW WHAT MAY BE THE CONSEQUENCE IF YOU ENTER HERE?

These were the members of the "Midnight Mission." The rest of the leaflet explained the dangers of disease and pointed to the "real road to happiness," with numerous extracts from the Bible. My Swedish companion told me that they were often beaten, insulted, and threatened by the prostitutes and pimps, who saw in their volunteer work an unfair interference with their "perfectly legitimate business." I certainly did not envy them their task, though I admired their courage.

VII

I said good-bye to the big Swede, who was returning to his ship, and set out on a long walk from Hamburg to Bremen. It was fifty miles as the crow flies, but I wanted to visit Lueneburg and tramp over the spring loveliness of the Lueneburger Heide.

I crossed into the " Altes Land " from Altona, avoided Harburg and Wilhelmsburg, and reached Winsen the first evening. The next three days were so perfect and peaceful that I soon forgot St. Pauli and its sordid depravity. The " Heide," an immense heath, was gay and purple, yellow and blue flowers ; Lueneburg itself was almost unchanged in its architectural glory since the Thirty Years War. I loafed through the streets ; it was so warm that at night I just wrapped myself in my stout *Loden* cloak and went to sleep in the open.

I came to Worpswede on a golden afternoon when the canopy of the sky was bluer than the grotto at Capri. The village lay in a forest of pine trees. Southwards the big bulk of Bremen was only a smudge on the horizon. I had not spoken to any human being except the shopkeepers from whom I bought bread and milk for the past five days. I was a little hungry for companionship. In a clearing in the forest I came upon a young, tall, fair-haired man who was lying on his back and staring at the sky. At first I thought he was asleep, but he turned and smiled at me companionably.

" Hullo, stranger," he said.

" Hullo," I said. " Do you mind if I join you ? "

He smiled. His face was like a good-tempered Viking's.

" Not at all," he answered easily. " There's plenty of space."

When I had stretched myself on the soft carpet of needles, he produced a mouth-organ from the pocket of his shorts and began to play a lilting tune, embroidering it with rolling cadenzas and unexpected arpeggios. It was a perfect tune for a perfect afternoon, and when he had finished it with a flourish, I applauded it heartily. Then we began to talk. He told me that he was an author who had published several books—" and there are fools that buy them "—that he was living at Worpswede, where he had a small cottage, a wife and two boys.

" You might call them twins," he said. " You see, when my lady-love decided to have a baby, a boy arrived. And when we looked closer, there were two of them."

I laughed. He told me that his name was Manfred and that he considered himself the laziest man in the world.

" I ought to be hard at work on an article explaining my philosophy," he confessed. " But I don't want to explain my philosophy. It might scare me into really having one. And why should I ? "

I agreed heartily, and told him about my months in Sweden

and the new job which was awaiting me in Berlin—to represent a Hungarian daily. At the end of our pleasant, rambling conversation he invited me to his house, where I met his pretty and *petite* wife, who was very young, and the twins, who were about four years old and very noisy indeed.

Those days I spent at Worpswede were the most peaceful of the "long nightmare." They were full of sun, sand and surf. There was no fixed programme or routine in the Manfred household. Everybody got up when he or she liked. Meals were at the most unexpected times and in the most unlikely places. I remember having breakfast at five o'clock in the morning high up in the branches of a tree. Dinner was sometimes at three in the afternoon, on other days nearer midnight. The twins slept, swam and talked according to their private tastes. Sometimes in the middle of a conversation Manfred got up and announced that he was going to do some work. At such occasions he retired to a shack which he called rather grandiloquently his "study," and pecked at the battered typewriter for a few hours. His creative work was accompanied by a flood of swearing in German sailors' slang. Though he belonged to the well-known class of authors who prefer talking to writing, he had already published five or six books. Two of them were about a tramp called Lampioon; strange, half-brutal, half-sentimental tales of a foot-loose man who went around the German landscape "kissing girls and young birches," who had murder on his conscience and experienced the most unusual adventures. Manfred's style had a peculiar, almost austere modesty. He was making quite a tidy income, but he was unable to take care of money, and sometimes we had to revert to the primitive method of lighting a fire by rubbing sticks together (Manfred knew how to do it: I just watched) because there was not enough cash in the house to buy a box of matches.

Worpswede was a colony of artists, writers and other escapists, but Manfred explained that he kept out of the way of other Bohemians—"because they might tempt me into becoming a Philistine by their appearance and wild talk." Sometimes I came upon a painter trying to put on canvas the fantastic panorama of sea and sand; sometimes in the village we met violently arguing men and women who were apt to use polysyllabic words and very long sentences. But otherwise we lived like savages—except that we had good food, plenty of beer, and an apparently inexhaustible fund of subjects to discuss. Manfred

would not talk politics—he said that he abhorred them—and he would not tell me of his experiences during the war. Sometimes he glanced at the twins and shook his head as if he wanted to chase away some gloomy thought. When I asked him what it was, he answered curtly; he hoped that the next war would come too early for his boys to fight in or would not come at all.

When I left, he gave me autographed copies of his books and promised to look me up as soon as he came to Berlin to see his publishers. But I never met him again.

VIII

I do not know whether any librarian has prepared statistics about the number of books trying to explain Hitler and his coming into power—but it must run into four figures. If you add the immense verbiage of essays and articles, you will discover that possibly all that can be said of the subject has been said not once but a thousand times. There is still a sporadic outbreak of books purporting to present the "final," the "most trustworthy" inside story. But no foreign correspondent, no renegade Nazi bigwig can claim to have penetrated the dark fastness of Adolf Hitler's brain. Some have made brave and intelligent attempts, like Conrad Heiden or Hermann Rauschning; but the facts are so contradictory, the evidence so much confined to tangible events, that not even the most brilliant psychiatrist could form a diagnosis, at least not an entirely valid one.

I would not dare to attempt explaining the blight of Nazism or the secret of Hitler. What I remember most vividly is the fact that very few people indeed realized the danger well in time—not even in the twelfth hour. I have already spoken of the comparative unconcern with which the middle classes watched the underground civil war of Communists and Nazis. Sometimes a foreign correspondent in desperate need of copy unearthed the bogey man of the "Brown Menace," but Britain or the U.S.A. certainly did not take Hitler seriously—not even when the Nazi Party became the largest in the Reichstag. This was hardly surprising; Germany was quite a distance away, and her official leaders, the veteran Hindenburg and austere Dr. Bruening, seemed to be capable of holding the extremists in check. But even Germany's neighbours did not feel any apparent anxiety at the steady rise of an ultra-nationalistic, racially intolerant and

bellicose political party. Nor was there within Germany any clear conception of what the rule of National Socialism would mean. I remember one Christmas in Berlin when the S.A. men arrived in lorries and began to shout their slogans of "*Juda verrecke!*" and "*Heil Hitler!*" along the Kurfürstendamm. People stopped on the sidewalks, stared at them, and laughed; for each of the stalwarts had a collecting-box for party funds, and they did not ask for birth certificates before they rattled it under the pedestrians' noses. There were many dangers in the Weimar Republic, but until the last few months a Nazi régime was something unthinkable. After all, Hindenburg had first offered the job of Minister of Postal Communications to the "Bohemian Corporal," and he should have been much better informed about the political weight Hitler and his party carried than the masses of *Bürgertum*. Elections were so frequent that they blunted the enthusiasm any stratum of the voters might have felt. They trusted the "sound men," the Hugenbergs and Meissners, to prevent any Putsch or other attempt at dictatorship.

About three months after I left Worpswede I was invited with some other foreign correspondents to attend a big rally of the Nazi Party in Berlin. I had never heard Hitler speak before and was interested to discover the mainspring of his success—although I did not intend to write at length about his movement. There was a Right Wing Government in my country and I did not think they deserved encouragement by the boosting of an anti-democratic political party in Germany.

My colleagues and I were a little annoyed when we had to pay the entrance fee like anybody else; a Dutch journalist protested hotly as he had no intention of swelling the war chest of the Nazis. But in the end he also parted with fifty *pfennigs*, and we took our places at the table reserved for the foreign press.

About ten thousand people crowded the huge hall. The dais of the speakers was decorated with huge swastika flags and a band played, very loudly, martial and patriotic airs. Brown-shirted ushers patrolled the aisles, keeping a sharp look out for any hostile element. Most of the audience consisted of workmen; there were a great many women, and even a sprinkling of children. It was like any other Berlin crowd: jovial, indifferent, vulgar and patient. The time set for the start of the meeting was long past, but the band went on playing. Finally, someone appeared on the rostrum and yelled that the Fuehrer was having an

important conference but would arrive any moment. This announcement was repeated twice. At last, after expectation had been raised to a considerable pitch, Hitler appeared with Goebbels and some other party leaders. The Brownshirts "heiled" him at the top of their voices, the drums rolled, the flags dipped—but the audience was remarkably silent, almost stolid.

After a few introductory words by Goebbels, Hitler began to speak. Or, rather: he did not speak—he roared and screamed. He pounded the table, he got very red in the face—and we stared at him, fascinated and amazed. His speech was a string of nonsensical slogans; he mouthed the same words over and over again.

"Glorious Germany . . . The Communists . . . Our Fatherland . . . we must be united . . . our enemies must be exterminated . . . the Jews . . . Judea must perish . . . the crime of Versailles . . . work . . . honour . . ."

It was a rigmarole of repetition. We, the foreign correspondents felt embarrassed. After all, we thought, this man had polled eight hundred thousand votes at the last election; and he could not even speak correct German! His pugnacious words were uttered in a voice which still bore traces of the broad and jovial Austrian dialect.

I rose to go when the Dutch journalist who had protested so hotly against the enforced entrance fee, grasped my arm.

"Look!" he whispered.

I followed his glance and was almost stupefied at the change which had come over the audience. The dull eyes gleamed, the faces were strained—a great many cupped their ears so that they should not lose a single one of the precious words. There was a breathless tension in their attitude—as if they were people waiting for some supreme revelation which would mean their ultimate bliss, their salvation. I glanced again at the gesticulating, vociferous figure on the platform. It seemed impossible to find any connection between him and these thousands who were listening enraptured. There must be something in their minds, I thought, which made them susceptible to such a crude magic. Some adjustment in the receiving sets of their spiritual mechanism which we foreigners lacked. They *did* believe that they were the chosen people; that, as the later song proclaimed: "To-day we own Germany, to-morrow the whole world is ours." They accepted meekly the doctrine that all Jews were arch fiends—

even if most of them had known poor Jews who were honest, industrious and kindly—and that Russia was a country in which babies were eaten alive. They really thought that Adolf Hitler was a reincarnation of the legendary Siegfried, Frederick the Great, Barbarossa, and all the other heroes of the German past. They were lost—damned, helpless automata in a nightmare world. I felt a faint alarm. The Germany I knew and loved; the Germany of Einstein and Thomas Mann, of Reinhardt and Liebermann, of the many writers, actors, scientists, philosophers I had admired in the company of all mankind—it seemed to be in horrible danger. This mass hypnotizer, this dangerous mountebank—where would he lead the Germans if he were given the opportunity?

The next time I saw the Brownshirts with their collecting boxes and leather puttees I was unable to laugh.

IX

Old Dr. Schweitzer was waiting at the station. He looked thin and frail; his hair and beard had whitened to a paler silver; his hands trembled when he clasped mine.

The city was smothered in flags; there was no single building which did not fly at least one huge swastika. A few weeks before Hitler had announced that the German Air Force was equal to Britain's; this was "Luftwaffe Day," to impress the Germans what a blessing a big air force was. It was four months since the Saar had returned to the Fatherland and the memory of the June purge a year ago had begun to fade. The Fuehrer had taken justice into his hands; for three days he had been the Supreme Judge of life and death—and his judgment had spelled death for a few hundreds of his most trusted comrades. Roehm had collapsed in the barrack square, foaming curses at the "coward" who did not have the courage to shoot him himself; Schleicher, Gregor Strasser, Heines had been killed—but this was 1935, and the world's memory had grown perceptibly shorter in these days of swift violence.

We—this time I had brought my wife with me—drove to the Wedding, the Poplar or Shoreditch of Berlin, and Dr. Schweitzer began to apologize in advance for the limited comfort he could offer me. He explained that they had no maid; Lotte, who had spent fifteen years with them, had to go because she was forty-four; no Aryan maid under forty-five was allowed

to serve in a Jewish house as there was the terrible danger of "race defilement." I glanced at old Dr. Schweitzer and swallowed my remark. Jerkily he "explained" a few other things: that he had to give up half of his flat because he was no longer allowed to handle panel patients and most of his private practice had gone; he and his wife were staying in Berlin because someone had to provide for their daughter. Recently there had been rumours about the "Gnadentod," the mercy death which the Nazis invented for mental patients or those suffering from an incurable disease. While they remained in Germany, they were able to see their daughter every two months and to assure her physical well-being. Their son-in-law, the young doctor, was waiting for his final permits before leaving for Palestine, where he hoped to start a new life.

In the flat Frau Schweitzer received us in a flutter; she apologized profusely for the "unusual circumstances," as if the Nazi rule was equal to some natural disaster, earthquake, hurricane or plague, something utterly impersonal. Then she sank into a plush arm-chair and burst into tears. Her husband patted her shoulder and muttered some vague consolation.

Later in the day I went to a bank to cash some *Register-marks* and buy a few necessities for our trip to Holland. I chose the Kaufhaus des Westens, as I had heard of shortage of certain things and thought that I was more likely to get them in a big department store.

I had to wait some time at the counter where they sold soap and shaving brushes as the single girl attendant was busy with an S.S. man—a huge fellow with a broad Slav face and high cheek-bones. He was fingering a big bottle of French perfume and talking urgently, impatiently to the saleswoman—a black-haired, pale-faced girl in a neat uniform. She seemed to be apologetic but firm while he pleaded earnestly. Suddenly he raised his voice:

"*Judengeschäft! Saubande!*" And he slammed the bottle on to the counter so that it broke. The perfume spilled over the glass and the girl tried to catch the remains of the bottle in abject terror. The S.S. man threw a few more insults at her and then strode out, shouldering one or two customers aside.

When I went up to the counter, the girl was crying quietly. She saw my questioning glance; perhaps she had lost self-control for a moment as she began to pour out her martyrdom:

" He wanted it twenty marks cheaper than the regular price . . . and when I told him that he would have to speak to the floor manager, he got furious. . . . And now I'll have to pay for the perfume—it's sixty marks—and if I can't pay it, they'll fire me. . . . I don't want to go to the *Arbeitslager* . . . I don't. . . . I am not very strong. . . ."

She noticed that she was talking too much and talking to a stranger, so she dried her eyes quickly and asked me what she could do for me. I bought a stick of shaving soap and one or two other things quickly—I felt very embarrassed and furious, too.

Later I heard that in the first months of the Nazi régime, S.S. and S.A. men often went into shops owned by Jews, calmly picked out whatever they wanted from the counter and took it away without paying. Later, when Kurt Daluege, Himmler's bitter foe, became head of the uniformed police, this practice stopped—but by that time it had cost the stores thousands of marks.

In the evening I went to a musical party arranged by the Collegium Hungaricum, the Berlin house of Hungarian students. It was a very handsome building in the Doretheenstrasse, opposite the back entrance of the University. For their library, which numbered many thousands of volumes, the Hungarians had taken over the former house of Reinhardt's ex-wife. The concert was rather boring, but afterwards I had a chat with the head of the Hungarian Institute and director of the College, an old friend of mine who had distinguished himself by scholarly works of literary criticism and research. He was still a young man, an Aryan and a great believer in German culture and genius.

" My position is fantastic," he told me while we were sipping Tokay in deep arm-chairs. " I am the only foreigner among all the professors—the Nazis sacked the lot. I am here only because this Institute is endorsed by Hungarian funds and if they laid their hands on it, we could easily retaliate in Budapest by confiscating their schools and colleges. As I am more or less immune from all the political dangers (though of course I keep my mouth discreetly shut), all the other professors come running to me whenever they are perplexed by all these new-fangled rules and instructions. Sometimes we get fifteen or twenty long circulars a week telling us exactly what to do. But that isn't the worst. You know who our Rector is—the Rector

of the University of Hegel and Helmholtz, of Einstein and Koch ? "

He began to laugh.

" A veterinary surgeon ! He is thirty-two years old and has gained his diploma—as a vet.—in some twopenny-ha'penny provincial university. But he is a very good Nazi. The perfect Prussian *Unteroffizier* ! He strides into the interfaculty meetings as if he were to address a barrack-roomful of raw recruits. The older men cannot understand this sudden change. They make slips. Their brain is not attuned to political considerations. And so they come to me—they know that I won't give them deliberately false advice in order that I may gain their places ! You know, that young vet. has appointed a commission to go through the university library and to remove every single book written by a non-Aryan ? We cannot get hold of the most important reference books for they are mostly collaborations, and among two dozen authors there is bound to be a Jew ! "

" What about the students ? " I asked.

" Oh, our friend the vet. is popular among the students ! He grades them according to political reliability. It concerns me much less than my colleagues, though recently the number of students who want to learn Hungarian in a hurry has increased almost alarmingly. But the other professors often come to me and show chits in which our beloved Rector enjoins them to let this or that stalwart Nazi pass—so that he shall be able ' to take up important Party duties.' If a professor fails to follow the gentle hint, he is called to the Rector's office and reminded that the interest of the State is above that of science and letters."

After this information I had little liking to go and visit my old university. I was afraid lest I should find it changed beyond recognition.

Next day I called on a charming lady who was running one of the few remaining literary agencies in Germany. She represented mainly English and American publishers and agencies ; as she was the proud possessor of a Swedish passport she had escaped serious interference from the Gestapo.

When she heard that I was going to England, she asked me to try and explain to our common business friends a few points she was unable to mention in any letter.

" Every book, before it is published, must be submitted to the *Reichschrifttumskammer*," she said. " No publisher would dare to buy a copyright before they had the approval of Dr.

Goebbels's organization. And yet they are in desperate need of American and English books, for their own authors have not achieved a single 'best-seller,' and apart from Fallada, Kästner and a few others, they are hardly read. They try to translate Hungarians and Italians but without any popular success. I, as an agent, must vouch for the fact that the foreign author is a pure Aryan. I wrote to London once or twice about this delicate point, but most of the agents and publishers replied that they refuse to undertake genealogical research for a few hundred *Sperrmarks* which could not be exported from Germany. Thereafter I had to do my own investigation. This, however, was only the first difficulty. The original British and American publisher was scrutinized. If his list contained too many Jewish authors or a single anti-Nazi book, the whole thing had to be started all over again. We got away in a few cases by stating that the book would express 'British immorality' or 'American abuses' to such an extent as to emphasize, by contrast, the advantages of Nazi Germany. Some of Cronin's and Sinclair Lewis's books were published under this plea. But I feel sometimes an awful cheat . . ."

She smiled. We began to talk about German literature under the Nazis, and I heard for the first time the long list of exiled writers. There seemed scarcely anybody left in Germany beyond a few mediocre nonentities. I was rather staggered to hear that my friend Manfred was still publishing books—I wondered how his happy-go-lucky philosophy, his loathing of any regimentation, could be reconciled with the Hitler creed of the strictest mental, physical and spiritual State control.

"There is one author," the Swedish lady said, "who is just as popular as ever. In fact, she is read even more."

"Who is she?" I asked.

"Courths-Mahler."

I laughed. Frau Courths-Mahler had been the most prolific authoress of the cheapest love romances. She published about ten books every year. She had two plots: rich man marrying poor girl, rich girl marrying poor man. There was a slight variation of the obstacles to the happy ending, but happy endings they were with inexorable regularity. She had written at least two hundred books and when she felt she could not cope with the demand, she trained her daughter-in-law to carry on. She, too, had adopted the same plot, modernized a little, but fundamentally the same, though the setting differed: Frau Courths-

Mahler liked to use exotic backgrounds while her daughter-in-law preferred the domestic scene. And now this lady who had less to do with literature than the cheapest writer of pot-boilers in America, was the sole remaining pillar of German literature. It would have been ridiculous if it had not been so tragic!

In the afternoon we took a local train to Wilhelmshöhe, a garden suburb of Berlin, where the Moeller family was now living. Two years after I had left Berlin for the first time they decided that now things were more settled, they could afford to have a baby. A boy was born and they thought that he would thrive better in the country. They had built their house themselves with very little skilled help and had created a large garden during the week-ends when Herr Moeller was at home. Klaus, the boy, was a fair-haired, mischievous sprite of a five-year-old, shy, yet affectionate.

They were overjoyed to see the companion of their many walks, the former university student who had shared so many of their evenings. In five minutes we had plunged back into the old intimacy. But I noticed how carefully they avoided any political discussion. I respected their reticence. When we parted we agreed to meet Frau Moeller and Klaus next day in town; we would visit together the "Babylonian Procession Street," just erected in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum.

I was deeply interested in her reactions to almost three years of Nazidom and I thought that if we were alone she might talk more freely. While Klaus and my wife were wandering among the immense sculptures, I drew her aside and asked her bluntly what she thought about it all.

"What choice did we have?" she replied, suddenly almost aggressive. "We were lower than the dust; and now we can raise our heads again. Look at Berlin—half of it is being rebuilt. Unemployment has vanished. Of course, a lot of people had to suffer—but I still prefer the suffering of many individuals to the final humiliation and destruction of the Fatherland . . ."

"So you think Germany is happy?"

"What is happiness?" she cried, still resentful. "We have our self-respect once more. Could you name a single one of our former leaders who was really capable, who could have guided us out of the fog of party-strife, economic distress and barren procrastination? At least Hitler gets things done . . ."

After that I did not dare to question her any more. But for the rest of the afternoon there was a queer restraint between

us and when she asked me to visit Wilhelmshöhe once again, I lied that my wife and I would have to leave the next day for Holland.

Yet I wanted to ask her opinion about all the queer things I had heard from the Hungarian professor, the Swedish literary agent and poor, bewildered Dr. Schweitzer. I did not think she would give me a satisfactory answer and I did not want to embarrass her. She had pointed out the hoardings which were covering so many building sites, and had been enthusiastic about the new architectural wonders Berlin would be given in a few years' time. That was the point when I could not resist a remark:

"Provided you haven't a war before then . . ." I said.

She stared at me.

"War? My husband has been to the naval manœuvres at Ruegen. He is in the reserve, you know. He enjoyed himself no end. But as for war—we have had enough of it. And all Germans must feel the same. If people abroad maintain the opposite, they must be mad. We Germans only want to work in peace. It has been said often enough and it is the truth . . ."

The same evening we went to the Opera. Frau Schweitzer insisted that we should be her guests and although I had a shrewd suspicion that she was breaking some regulation by attending the performance—the Nuremberg laws had already banned Jews from theatres and concerts except those organized by their own associations with Jewish artists—I could not refuse. Perhaps she thought that in the company of foreigners she would be safe; nor was her appearance at all Jewish.

Dusolina Giannini, the famous Italian singer, appeared in *Cavalleria Rusticana*; a very indifferent German tenor was her partner. The performance was billed as a gala occasion, but there was not a single man in evening dress in the house. Or rather there was one solitary gentleman in faultless tails at whom the other members of the audience stared curiously. He must have felt uncomfortable because he did not stay for the second act.

But what struck me most was the almost incredible rudeness of the playgoers to the foreign guest star. They scarcely applauded her but shouted for the German tenor—a fat, stocky man with a somewhat squeaky voice—who appeared beaming and took three curtain calls. There could be no question of artistic rank—Signora Giannini was at an unattainable height above her partner. But the fierce chauvinism which had been systematic-

ally pumped into German life during the last three years, was showing its results. Italy was not yet a member of the Axis, but even if she had been, a German singer was *eo ipso* better than an Italian one.

After the performance we sat for a while in the Café Unter den Linden. The streets were quiet and the café half-deserted. Three S.S. men swaggered along the pavement and people gave them, instinctively, a wide berth.

Next day we made a short excursion to Potsdam. The friend who took us in his car worked in the office of the *Berliner Tageblatt*—formerly one of the best German dailies which the Nazis killed because even after its *Gleichschaltung* it represented an uncomfortable competition for the *Volkischer Beobachter*—but he was rather reticent about his work. He was willing to discuss music, scenery and those new-fangled electric razors of which he had seen advertisements in *Esquire*—but most other subjects were taboo.

I had often been to Potsdam and suddenly I noticed something strange.

"I say," I remarked, "where is the Kilometerberg?"

The Kilometerberg was a fair-sized hillock between Berlin and Potsdam. I remembered the landmarks well—but the Kilometerberg had disappeared.

"It's gone," my friend said laconically.

"What do you mean?"

He glanced around though we were in a moving car and there was little danger of being overheard.

"Well," he said, "they built this *Autobahn*. At first they wanted to take it around the hill. But then it wouldn't have been straight. Then they thought they would tunnel through the hill. They had already started when Hitler heard of it. He asked how many people would have employment if the whole hill was carted away. They said about ten times as many as those working at the tunnel. So he said, take it away—and they did."

I began to understand why there was no unemployment in Germany.

We had supper in a lakeside restaurant. They served a *peach-bowle* which was like the dream of a gourmet who also likes his liquor strong. The air was mild, little boats were anchored a few hundred yards from the beach and a dozen couples were dancing on the terrace below us. It was peaceful

and pleasant—but I could not help thinking of the Kilometerberg, Frau Moeller's tight lips and the night at the Opera. In three years young Klaus would become a member of the Hitler Jugend. Perhaps Herr Moeller would change his mind about having had enough of war. Perhaps . . . but the *peach-bowle* was cool and potent. It took away, at least for a moment, the bad taste from my palate.

When we left next morning there were ten one thousand mark notes hidden in my typewriter, twisted into small cylinders. They represented the total cash fortune of a young editor who wanted to get out of Germany because he felt that sooner or later he would run afoul of the Nazis. Before Hitler's coming to power he had been working for a Social Democrat paper and had managed to acquire an unusually large number of enemies among the Nazis. He had escaped the first big round-up and had spent all these years in hiding, disguised by a beard and a set of false identification papers. Now, under his assumed name, he had acquired permission to go to Holland "for a visit"; but he could not risk an attempt of smuggling out money. I heard of him through a common friend, who asked me to help the young man. After some hesitation I undertook the task of getting out the money—though of course it would have meant prolonged unpleasantness for me, too, if I had been caught red-handed. I did not dare to tell my wife about it and tried to control my own nervousness. I considered it a brilliant stratagem that I bought a copy of *Mein Kampf*—they soaked me nine marks for a "superior edition" at the railway station—and when we approached the German-Dutch frontier, I put it on the seat beside me, as conspicuously as possible.

We passed the last German station and I was waiting with a madly beating heart. The train rattled over points, passed slowly over the flat country and then drew into the Dutch frontier station. The Dutch came to inspect our passports—the Germans had done this soon after the train had left Berlin—but no German customs inspector appeared. I could not explain the riddle—perhaps Herr Himmler was taking a nap or something—but on that day and that particular train the Germans omitted to inspect the passengers' luggage. We were on Dutch soil, safe and secure. As soon as we had gathered speed, I took *Mein Kampf*, shut it carefully and then chucked it through the window.

"Why did you do that?" my wife asked, wide-eyed.

"I don't need it any more."

"But you haven't read a single page of it," she protested.

"Oh, it was just camouflage," I explained. Then, realizing that she was seriously concerned about my sanity, I told her everything. I unscrewed my typewriter and produced the small, tightly rolled up cylinders of banknotes. She almost fainted when she discovered what risk I had shouldered. I had to fetch a glass of *Bols* from the dining-car before she recovered. Then she expressed her opinions about my stupidity at length and with fluency. Her lecture indeed took up most of the journey to Amsterdam. But I did not care—the main thing was that someone who was a good European could have a small "stake" when he started life afresh in a foreign country. In Amsterdam I banked the money—and three weeks later the young sub-editor claimed it. I did not meet him until three years later when he came to England as correspondent of two important Swiss papers, and then his gratitude was a bit embarrassing. I told him it was *Mein Kampf* he should thank.

X

On a scorching summer morning in August, 1937, we arrived at Nuremberg. It was barely seven o'clock, but the sun was already fierce. We had travelled in a crowded slow train from Voegelenzang, the Dutch village where the scouts of the world had gathered for their last jamboree; we had started on the previous afternoon and still had a day's uncomfortable jogging before us. But here in the capital of Franconia the journey was to be broken for eighteen hours so that we could stretch our legs and rest a little.

The boys formed threes and marched to the garden of the Kulturverein, where breakfast was to be served. We journalists followed in a less military manner. The garden was a pleasant place and breakfast a simple though nourishing affair of black bread and coffee. At least they called it coffee. One burly colleague of mine declared that it must have been brewed from seven different kinds of grass and some pea-shells. We had the bright idea of sending back one of our group to the train, where we had stored some Dutch butter and cheese. The first messenger was followed by three others, for soon we found ourselves feeding a considerable part of the Nuremberg Hitler Jugend. The youngsters had stared so persistently and appeal-

ingly at the butter we spread and the cheese we cut that somehow we couldn't resist them.

Some of us decided that we wanted a bath and a shave and went off in search of the *Stadtbad.* It was a large white building with the notice: "JUDEN SIND UNERWUENSCHT" (Jews are not desired) in three-foot letters on its door. Inside several other notices explained that "non-Aryans" could not use the swimming pool and were admitted to the single bathrooms only after six p.m. The barber shop was just opening and a little wizened man received us cordially. When he discovered that we were Hungarians, he hastened to describe his war experiences in Hungary and inquired whether we knew anything about a certain girl—her name was as common in Hungarian as Mary Smith is in English—with whom he had spent agreeable days during his convalescence in 1916 in a Budapest military hospital. We regretted that we did not and he tackled first the stiff beard of a Hungarian journalist and solicitor. He lathered his face, sharpened the razor and then, poising it over the solicitor's neck, he asked:

"Now, isn't it a fact that our Fuehrer is much appreciated in Hungary?"

My friend, the dapper counsel of many important industrial companies and commercial bodies, swallowed hard. His eyes were trying to fix themselves on the gleaming blade of the razor. He happened to be not only non-Aryan but also a most outspoken denouncer of Nazism in print. But even the most courageous man hesitates before he defies a razor blade half an inch from his throat.

"Uhnhm," he mumbled non-committally.

"If only all the nations would realize," the barber continued, "that Adolf Hitler wants the best for the world. He is the most misunderstood man in history, don't you think so?"

"Ye-es . . ." my friend stammered.

But his inquisitor was not satisfied with so vague an answer. Bit by bit he drew from the anti-Nazi solicitor an almost complete avowal of the Hitlerite creed. I saw beads of perspiration form on my friend's forehead—and these had nothing to do with the heat. When at last he was through, he almost rushed from the barber's shop while his tormentor stared after him in mild amazement.

Refreshed, we decided to join the scouts who were being reviewed by the master of Franconia, Gauleiter Julius Streicher.

We found them drawn up in a double line in the courtyard of the castle which dominates Nuremberg. A stocky, bald-headed man with deep-set eyes and fleshy ears was strutting along the line. The boys were standing on parade in the blazing sunshine. Streicher stopped suddenly in front of a boy who had very fair hair, blue eyes, a well-proportioned body and almost classic features. But he seemed to be a little perturbed under the ferocious scrutiny of the Gauleiter.

"You see!" the bald-headed man crowed triumphantly. "It's as plain as daylight that Germans and Magyars are related in race! Look at him! The perfect Aryan! Why, he might be a German youth."

A very slight titter ran through the troop. The scout-master, in charge of the boys, smiled a little tightly, acknowledging the "compliment" with a stiff bow. And Germany's Number One Jew-baiter, the editor-in-chief of the infamous *Stuermer*, launched into a long and confused harangue on the sins of the "stinking Jews," interspersed with an attack on everything and everybody anti-Nazi.

We, the journalists, watching the scene, could hardly keep our faces straight. For we knew—and all the boys knew and the scout-master knew, too—that the fair-haired, blue-eyed boy whom Streicher had picked out as the perfect Aryan was the son of a Jewish cantor employed by the Buda synagogue to chant the ancient psalms of Israel on the eve of Sabbath. . . .

In the afternoon we sat down in a beer garden, where dark beer gushed into a large basin from the navels of two huge negro statues. We had an escort—a young man from the Press Bureau of the Gauleitung—and I tried to draw him out discreetly about his remarkable chief. He fell into the trap easily; displaying a queer pride in Streicher's abnormal vagaries, he gave me many illuminating details about his character.

It seemed that he was for ever getting into hot water, committing blunders, yet always escaping scot-free. He was a fanatic, but at the same time a realist—at least in financial matters. Once he had been indiscreet enough to allow himself to be photographed sitting behind his sumptuous desk dressed in a cigar and nothing else. He had sent prints to his friends and one, ornately framed, to Frau Scholtz-Klink, leader of German womanhood. The latter was "not amused," and Streicher was severely reprimanded by Hitler—but even this did not damp his spirits. He had had the temerity to revile

men and women high in the councils of the Party; he had abused and blackened the name of every human being who did not share his extremists' views. His favourite diversion was to swagger through the streets of Nuremberg with a rhinoceros whip and insult the first Jew or Jewess that crossed his path. The episode usually ended by his victim being hustled off to the nearest prison.

Again and again the world had read of his downfall and disgrace, only to discover him within a week or two in some photograph close to the Fuehrer and apparently on the best terms with him. Scores of prominent Nazis have been dropped like hot potatoes by Hitler for infinitely lesser crimes, yet Streicher still reigns supreme in Franconia. It was to me an especially cruel irony of fate that he should rule the city of the *Meistersingers* in which Hans Sachs and Albrecht Duerer had created the German Renaissance. A few months after we had seen him picking out the son of the Jewish cantor as the perfect specimen of Aryan youth, he fell ill and had to undergo a serious operation—yet his zest for abuse and vituperation, his unflagging hate for everything non-Nazi and non-Fascist remained undamped.

Later a German historian who had escaped to England told me that Streicher was forgiven everything (even occasional mutiny and not so occasional grumbling against Party discipline), because, on that famous day of the Munich *Putsch* in 1923, when a number of prominent Nazis were killed and Goering was severely wounded (though in a most unromantic spot), he had shielded Adolf Hitler with his body. The Fuehrer, as we know, had turned and fled, while Ludendorff advanced slowly and stiffly into the hail of bullets towards disgrace and surrender. Streicher, I was told, had defended Hitler not only against the bullets of the Reichswehr, but against the indignation of his own followers. Whether the tale is true or not, it would be difficult to decide—but Julius Streicher can still say and write what he wants to . . . a privilege certainly rare in the Third Reich.

After dinner we went for another stroll, for our train was not to start until early in the morning.

Under the carved eaves of a Gothic town-house a strong street-light burned. Its rays fell directly on a wire-covered frame behind which the pages of the latest *Brennessel* ("Nettle"), a comic paper published in Munich, but directed by Streicher,

were exhibited. The front page bore a striking " masterpiece " in black and white. It depicted a monk, standing on a table and coyly lifting his habit. A zip-fastener ran from neck to hem, enabling the monk to display a fleshy leg. Around him the fat, vacuous faces of other monks. Underneath the caption: " *Das ist die letzte Mode* . . ." (This is the newest fashion !)

For Streicher was battling not only against the Jews, but against all creeds and churches. Here in Nuremberg the crazy concoction of Ludendorff and his wife, the so-called " Wotanist " religion, had one of its main centres. A special book-shop displayed anti-Christian pamphlets and books. It was significant of the methods that the centre of the display was a book containing selections of Roman authors of the first century. It seemed that the anti-Christian lies which the suave Latins had collected almost two thousand years ago were still considered good enough to serve as ammunition against the followers of Jesus. Did not those Roman writers maintain that the early Christians drank the blood of children at their " love-feasts " and practised dark cults in the catacombs ? That they were Communists and shared their women just as they shared their goods ? Streicher's city was willing to believe such things—at least the ancient hoary slander was offered to them openly.

Of all the military leaders of Germany it was General Ludendoff who took defeat the hardest. He did not see the causes of it—the superior strength of the Allies, the diplomatic blunders of the Kaiser and his associates, the sheer weariness of the people. Behind the victory of Britain and France he saw the dark machinations of Roman Catholics, the Jesuits, Freemasonry and Socialists. He seemed to think that all these " forces " combined to bring about the downfall of Germany and did not stop to reflect that they would have made strange bedfellows. During the nineteenth century there had been a strong anti-clerical movement in the Reich, and Ludendorff availed himself of its long obsolete weapons. He founded a publishing firm and a review with the high-falutin' title, *The Sacred Sources of German Strength*. The publishing firm flooded Germany with anti-Christian propaganda books—the most obnoxious one was written by the General's wife, Mathilda Ludendorff, who had strong Buddhist leanings. Its title was nothing if not blunt: " Away with Christ ! " Pamphlets and postcards, posters and pictures were prepared, all of anti-Christian propaganda. But Streicher added to this half-baked philosophy his own brutal

vulgarity. Monks and nuns were pilloried in the *Brennessel*, and if he could invent a juicy piece of moral misbehaviour in which clergymen figured, he splashed it over the front page of the *Stürmer* with the same sadistic pleasure with which he denounced the Jews.

I was glad when our train left at last and Nuremberg vanished into the night. Yet two years later I had to return on behalf of an American newspaper to "interview" Julius Streicher. I had procured an introduction from a Berlin actress with whom I had been acquainted in pre-Hitler days; she had been rather intimate with the Jew-baiter, though their friendship had lasted a short time.

Streicher received us in his spacious office, which was decorated with anti-Jewish posters and old masters stolen from various Franconian museums. I had prepared some questions, but these he brushed away impatiently. When I told him that the interview might be published in British and French papers, he said:

"Economically, politically and culturally, Great Britain and France are completely under the power of the Jews. Their Governments do not represent the interests of their own people, but the interests of the Jewish race."

I blinked. I had heard much about the outspoken rudeness of Herr Streicher, but after all, when talking for publication, even the most blatant Nazi overlords kept their observations within the bounds of international courtesy.

I risked the question whether he had the same opinion about the United States.

"The U.S.A.," Streicher declared, without a moment's hesitation, "is the country of Freemasonry, and therefore of Jewish swindlers. This is scarcely to be wondered at, seeing that the average American is the easiest prey of every kind of 'mysticism.' In that so-called 'free' and 'progressive' country there are the maddest sects and the most criminal secret associations. One of the chief Freemasons is Mr. President Roosevelt. He is the puppet of Freemasonry and the tool of the Jews. His policy is subservient to the money-lenders of Wall Street, and they are all Jews. What else could you expect from a Freemason?"

I muttered something about Rockefeller and Morgan, who could scarcely be described as Jews, but Herr Streicher would not listen.

" The Jews are the misfortune of mankind," he said. " Whoever wants a bad thing must hate the good one. And the other way round, too."

This sounded a trifle involved, but he continued to rant about the sons of Israel.

" The Jews are spawns of the devil. They deserve no pity. National Socialism must carry on its fight to the bitter end. Of course we do not expect to solve the Jewish question overnight. We have banned the Jews from our parks and restaurants, from theatres and baths, from professions and farming. But they are altogether too deeply rooted in German soil. Our next aim must be to cut those roots completely; we must achieve a clean division of the races. We must revive the ghettos."

" Do you think, then, Herr Gauleiter," I asked, " that there are pure races in the world? Can it be proved that anyone belongs to this or that racial group? "

Snorting, he began to bang the table.

" All that is not race in this world," he shouted, " is empty straw, shifting sand. Every nation which permits the Jews to rule its land must perish. Did not Luther himself write: 'You must know, dear Christ, that after the Devil you have no bitterer, more poisonous, or violent enemy than the Jew.' "

" And how does National Socialism plan to keep the race pure? "

" By punishing every racial crime with death; by executing every Jew who dares to lay hands on an Aryan girl. That is the only way. You know how important racial purity is? Of all the states of the American Continent, Mexico, Nicaragua, Honduras and Salvador have the highest ration of half-breeds. And in these countries the number of bloody and devastating revolutions during the last fifty years was the highest, too. The U.S.A., Costa Rica and the Argentine, where there are hardly any half-breeds, had no revolutions at all. Isn't this full proof how racial purity leads to unity, peace and prosperity? "

I was too flabbergasted by his interpretation of American history to do more than to nod silently. I felt, however, that I had had quite enough of Herr Streicher's wisdom and hastened my last question.

" Do you think then, that the solution of the Jewish problem would dispose of all major international and national difficulties? "

He rose and planted himself in front of his desk, hands on hips, chin jutting aggressively.

"Great Britain must renounce decadent France, give up every attempt to conciliate the country of Jewish Red Terror; she must give up her useless alliances, pacts and secret treaties with the Balkan States. She must realize at last that the Jews are her only enemies and Germany is her real friend. Great Britain and Germany together can do great things—can save the world from the Jewish peril, from international Bolshevism and the other evil forces of mankind. If Great Britain is willing to do this, she can save civilization—if not, she will kill civilization and at the same time commit suicide. . . ."

I asked him whether he would like to see a draft copy of the "interview," but he replied that this was not necessary. No Jewish-owned newspaper would print it, anyhow, and he knew well that all American, British and French newspapers were owned by Jews.

XI

What were the signs in the last summer of peace that the long nightmare was approaching its culminating horrors, that the poison which had been gathering and swelling within the body of the Reich would overflow at last? They were few and not easily discerned. A month or so before we started to drive across Europe, Poland had rejected the German demands for the return of Danzig, Ribbentrop had conferred with Ciano and the Axis had become a full-fledged military pact; the Protestant Church in Austria had been brought under Nazi control; Herr Brinkmann, director of the Reichsbank and Under-Secretary for Economics, had made an indiscreet speech about the failure of the Four-Year Plan and been summarily dismissed; the dream of eighty million Germans within the Reich had been realized by a census which included Memel, Bohemia and Moravia; a non-aggression pact had been signed with Denmark—but the world was accustomed to crises, pacts and speeches, weary of living continuously at the highest pitch of excitement, merely wanted to be left alone. The morning on which we drove from London to Dover was dew-fresh and Kent seemed to be the loveliest garden under the still gentle sun. We ate a late lunch in a small Belgian town on the way from Dunkirk to Brussels, and the smiling waitress produced

the best wine they had in the gabled inn. An ice-cream seller stood at the corner, his cart had a striped awning and many little bells. Brussels was busy and gay; Louvain seemed to have forgotten the terrible scars of the war and the S.S. men at the frontier just before Aachen behaved like cinema ushers. They asked perfunctory questions about the amount of money we were bringing into Germany and seemed to be surprised that we were able to converse with them in their own language.

It was somewhere between Aachen and Koblenz that the car began to cough and then stopped suddenly at the bottom of a steep hill. A passing lorry gave us a tow to the nearest garage, where a surly mechanic declared that it would take only an hour or so to put the matter right.

While my travelling companions drifted off in search of a drink, I was content to sit in the shade and watch the life of the village, very leisurely and sleepy in the hot afternoon. Suddenly a plump man with an open-necked shirt and a creased brown suit drove into the garage yard and stopped his rattling, dusty car. He had a short conference with the mechanic, then strolled over and curiously inspected our car. I told him its make and price and we began to talk. He was a cattle-buyer and seemed to be reasonably prosperous.

"Tell me," he asked abruptly, leaning closer and talking in a confidential whisper, "have they killed all the Jews in London yet?"

I stared.

"Oh, don't think we don't know all about it," he continued, visibly hurt at my supposed reticence. "Every Saturday the people in London go to the *Ostende* and kill Jews, eh?"

It took me some time to explain to him that the English week-end was given to more peaceful pastimes than the systematic assassination of people living in the East End. But he remained completely unconvinced. Then I began to press him as to the source of his information. Well, the radio had said so and there was an article in the *Angriff*. Now, this man did not sound at all like a rabid anti-Semite; the scurrilous statement that the sons of Israel were regularly sacrificed to the bloodlust of the London mob did not give him any special satisfaction; yet he accepted it without question. Propaganda must be a terrible force, I thought. English newspapers seldom went to the Third Reich, and when they did few people read them. It was quite conceivable that a clever propaganda bureau—and

who cleverer than Paul Joseph Goebbels ?—could drill a series of atrocious lies into the heads of gullible and well-disciplined citizens. The German Reich was organized with really Prussian thoroughness ; the system did not leave anything to chance. First it was put to the Germans that Britain was ruled by the Jews and therefore degenerate. Then, with a subtle twist, they were told that the English people, their Nordic brothers, had risen against this tyranny and were adopting the drastic methods which the Gestapo and the S.A. had perfected. Herr Schulze, the German man-in-the-street, was made to think, the English are no better than the Nazis in dealing with the Jews, why should he object to the way in which the Jews in Germany are hated and hurt ? There was no way of counteracting this propaganda which had been going on with scientific precision and the highest standard of psychological exactitude for over six years. It was an amazing thing, German propaganda, for in the end it became the monster of these modern Frankensteins. The propaganda of Goebbels and Ribbentrop was so efficient that, finally, it seduced even Hitler himself ! Persistently the Fuehrer had misinterpreted and falsely estimated Anglo-Saxon psychology and morale. Adolf Hitler, I am sure, was convinced that Britain would not go to war on Poland's account. He was certain that after the collapse of France the British would capitulate. He accepted Ribbentrop's assurance that by the indiscriminate bombing of London and other cities Britain could be brought to her knees. And when all this failed he believed his advisers when they told him that Britain would forget all his misdeeds if he were to turn against Russia. He was fully persuaded that the British—*and* the Americans—would be glad to make peace with him. They might even march with him against the Communists ! If the story of his nervous collapse is true, it must have been caused by the disappointment when Britain and Russia became Allies and American opinion—even the opinion of the Christian churches—still insisted that Nazism was the arch-enemy of democracy and that Russia deserved all the available aid. Truly, those who declare that lying propaganda is a deadly boomerang are fully vindicated by the strange case of a deluded Adolf Hitler.

Almost every town through which we drove was beflagged in the hot summer days of 1939. The campaign of nerves against Poland was in full swing ; the black headlines of the *Volkischer Beobachter*, underlined with gory red, screamed

murder from the news-stands. The bombshell of the Russo-German pact was still almost six weeks away, but the sense of expectation was in the air.

I had written to four of my friends suggesting that we might perhaps meet at Frankfurt, as we were not travelling through Berlin. But when I inquired at the General Post Office I found only four letters of regret.

Frau Moeller wrote saying that her husband was once more on naval manœuvres. Klaus had to attend his annual Hitler Jugend Lager, on which he was very keen. She had promised to do some translation work—voluntary—for the League of Germans Abroad. It was great fun though she found some of the stuff a little bit crude. But then, it had to appeal to simple-minded people. And she finished, oddly enough, by asking me whether I knew anything about a book called *Peter Pan* of which she had heard a great deal; was it worth reading? I thought that Barrie and Nazi propaganda for Germans abroad would hardly go together and so I answered that the book might not be the most suitable reading in the present circumstances. . . .

My American journalist friend sent a message that he could not come to Frankfurt—as a matter of fact he was on his way to Holland *en route* for the "good old U.S.A." It seemed that he had been indiscreet enough to hint at a disagreement between Hitler and some of the military big-wigs in one of his dispatches. Herr Schmidt, the suave and portly liaison officer of the Propaganda Ministry took him out to lunch at the Adlon—this was the usual procedure—and gently remonstrated with him. When he "misbehaved" again, he was told to get out. His letter, written in an American slang, which must have puzzled the Gestapo censors, busy within Germany, ended:

"And am I glad to get out of this country? Oh boy! The only good-bye I want to say is a Bronx cheer. Sooner or later—and I should say rather sooner than later—hell's gonna bust in your old world and this baby will enjoy a grandstand view—from three thousand miles away."

A few typewritten lines with a strange signature informed me that Dr. Schweitzer and his wife had left Germany and were living at Tel Aviv. There was no mention of their daughter but I remembered with a heavy heart that they would not leave Germany as long as she was alive—so she must be dead.

But the most amazing communication came from Manfred, the carefree, individualist Worpswede hermit. He said that he could not see me at Frankfurt because he was busy at the scenario of a Horst Wessel film. "It's going to be good, strong stuff," he wrote enthusiastically. "I never knew I could work well for the screen. You ought to try it, my boy. Why don't you come up to Berlin—we need men with bright ideas. I have a three year contract with the UFA and we are turning out pictures which will make Hollywood look silly."

I gasped at the idea that Manfred, the happy Viking, was co-operating in a film based on the life of a third-rate pimp who was killed in a brawl over the earnings of a prostitute. But apparently he had changed his mind about a number of things—National Socialism and its heroes being one of them. . . .

East of Regensburg military lorries became very numerous on the *Autobahn* and we were glad to turn off into a minor road. Of course we lost our way and stopped in a small town to inquire about the route. I attempted three times to accost a man in some kind of uniform, starting my request always with "*Guten Tag*," but he resolutely turned his back on me. At last, after the third attempt, he looked at me and said with deep contempt:

"Das ist nicht unser Grüss!" (This is not our greeting!)

I realized then that I should have addressed him with "Heil Hitler!"

We left Germany—Greater Germany as she was already proudly calling herself—on a June afternoon. The S.S. men on the frontier were as polite and bored as they had been at Aachen. When we turned the car towards Budapest we were followed by about two dozen motor cyclists, their handle-bars decorated with small Swastika flags. They were driving into Hungary to have a square meal for the ten marks they were allowed to export. But there was also a general election in the country and the Nazis felt that they should assure the election of some "Arrow Cross" members of parliament who would help them to "cement the friendship" of the two countries.

I felt that no one in Europe could escape the long nightmare. And for the first time I began to doubt whether there would be an awakening from it for many years to come. . . .

Three

My lord, my king, my land is Magyar land,
A sere and barren land. Your need is great
To live upon the heights. What seek you here?
What set you by this feasting and this wine?
Is to be Magyar worthy of his fate?

ENDRE ADY

. . . For alien nations do not understand
His guileless heart, his good and stainless hand,
His unoffending love, his ploughman's life
So blest with leisured song, so free from strife.

ERNOE SZÉP

O Magyar, think no German true
No matter how he flatter you:
For though his promises invoke
A letter bigger than your cloak,
And though he add (the big poltroon!)
A seal to match the harvest moon,
You may be sure he means not well—
May Heaven blast his soul to hell!

HUNGARIAN FOLK SONG (*18th Century*)

GLASS PRISON

I

ABOUT THE end of my second year in London I met at a very mixed party a gentleman from Ploesti. He was in a very affable mood and distributed cigars and advice with equal magnanimity. He meant well but he was what the Americans call a "wise guy" and such wisdom can be extremely irritating.

He overheard a remark of mine; I had told our hostess that in time I hoped to become a naturalized British subject—not only because for twelve years I had dreamed of settling in England but also because I passionately believed in all the things Britain stood for. "Including hot-water bottles, single windows, luke-warm beer and woollen underwear," I

added facetiously, knowing that in England one should always crack a joke, however feeble, when one was desperately serious.

The gentleman from Ploesti patted my shoulder.

"Very commendable," he cried. "But I must warn you—it is very difficult to become a British subject. Very difficult indeed. They investigate your past, present and future most carefully. A gentleman from Scotland Yard comes along and spends practically a whole day with you, chatting about this and that, drawing you out, ascertaining whether you are a suitable man to be admitted to the citizenship of the British Commonwealth. And there is one particularly dangerous question which they always ask. . . ."

He leaned forward and whispered into my ear.

"They ask you whether, if Britain were at war with your native country, you would be prepared to fight against your own flesh and blood?"

"And what is the right answer?" I asked.

"You see, if you say 'no,' that is wrong," he continued, "because it shows you won't be a loyal subject of His Majesty. On the other hand, if you answer 'yes,' it proves that you have no real patriotism, because you can change your loyalties so easily. But I have found the right answer! I said that of course I would fight the King's enemies—but that I should prefer to be sent to a front where I would not meet my former countrymen."

When I set out to write about my own country in this series of epitaphs for a Europe lost beyond redemption, I remembered the gentleman from Ploesti and his answer to the difficult question. I also remembered the Communist who had declared that national boundaries and patriotic slogans were deader than the snows of yesteryear. Rather mischievously I decided to test his opinions and took him to an international football match between Hungarian and Italian teams. At first he watched the game with a sneer on his face but when the Magyar centre-forward scored a goal, he found himself cheering like mad and when one of the Italians committed a foul he loudly demanded his blood exactly as fifty thousand others were doing. By the end of the match he had become a fervent nationalist—and after it he kept silent for a long time. Of course, the experiment was a superficial one; a hardened Marxist would have kept a poker face whatever narrow shaves the goalkeeper

of his national team had to endure. Yet—is it possible to eradicate the impressions, experiences and memories of birthplace, childhood and adolescence, the mass of complexes and inhibitions which make up our national character? The recent months have witnessed a fierce revival of patriotism in the country which chose the "Internationale" for its anthem. Even in the International Brigade of the Spanish Civil War the different nationalities were divided as far as possible into separate units. Patriotism is something more than our conditioned reflexes to a piece of bunting, a few bars of music—and I doubt if a good European can be a man of no fixed abode, with neither country nor home-town.

A few years ago I wrote a very sincere and very bad book which I called *The Glass Prison*. Luckily, it was never published. In a long and complicated story I tried to present the plight of the "small nations," the countries which did not belong to a larger community like the Anglo-Saxon, the Scandinavian, the Germanic or the Slav. I declared that the sons and daughters of such nations were living in "glass prisons" whose walls were transparent but none the less solid. Their utter loneliness and isolation was due to the fact that they could seldom merge into the main body of Mankind; they were destined to be eternally strangers wherever they went. Yet most of them felt the urge to get out of the "glass prison." And I quoted the anguished lines of Hungary's greatest modern poet, Endre Ady:

"None lives whom I've begot, from whom descend
I claim no relative, I clasp no friend:
An utter orphan I,
An utter orphan I!

"I am, like every man, a mystery,
A lonely headland by an Arctic sea,
A wisp of wandering fire,
A wisp of wandering fire.

"But, oh, in solitude no peace I find;
I yearn to show myself to all Mankind,
That they may look on me,
That they may look on me.

" Hence issues all: self-torture, anguish'd song:
I yearn for others' love; I would belong
To others' lives at last,
To others' lives at last."

" I yearn to show myself to all Mankind. . . ." " I would belong to others' lives at last. . . ." Does it, I wonder, express to English ears the suffering and loneliness of the original lines? I hoped it did, when I wrote my book. But not much later I realized that there were " glass prisons " all over the world and one could be as lonely spiritually and emotionally in Manchester as in Montenegro. Yet I still think that the children of small nations have a far more difficult and bitter time in gaining entrance to the mansions of Mankind than those who belong to large racial, national or linguistic groups.

II

The reader may well wonder what the preceding section is all about. I feel like the cat of the Hungarian proverb circling around the plate of hot gruel. I want to present the epitaph of my own country's last twenty-odd years and I feel that I have to clarify first in my own mind what I dare tell and what I daren't. " We Hungarians are such a small nation that we must brag all the time " a Budapest critic told me once. I know that this bragging has often jarred on the ears of foreign visitors; that it has given the Magyars the reputation of being supercilious and unsociable. In fact, there is no more gregarious being than the average Hungarian. But the urge " to show himself to all Mankind " seems to be deep in his soul and he is desperately hampered by the obstacles of language and geographical distance. Until a few years ago not many visitors from the West ventured beyond Vienna. The Hungarian playwrights, novelists, musicians who found popularity abroad were not always the best, the most talented—either they were lucky or their art was sufficiently shallow to become international. Of course, the best Hungarian plays have remained unperformed, the best novels untranslated, the best music unplayed in the great cultural centres of the West. It is bitterly significant that at least three Nobel Prize Winners were of undoubtedly Hungarian origin yet of German nationality, though in the person of Professor Szentgyörgyi at last a " genuine "

Magyar had been honoured recently. "We are so few that even our murderers ought to be pardoned!" cried Count Stephen Szechenyi whose life was such a typical Magyar fate. He was the first Hungarian aristocrat in the early nineteenth century who returned from his travels, his brain seething with plans of reform. He wanted gradual, not violent change; he wanted to raise the standard of civilization and culture before pleading for political independence. He was swept aside by the hot-blooded genius of Kossuth and saw his country plunged into revolution against the Austrian yoke. He lost his mind and spent his last years in the Asylum at Döbling. Yet he retained enough of his brilliance to write a scathing answer to a pamphlet in which the Austrian Minister Bach boasted of his achievements in "disciplining" the rebellious Magyars after their armies had been crushed by the Russians. His denunciation of the ruthless tyranny of Austrian bureaucracy sent Bach toppling from his position; yet a short time afterwards the "greatest Hungarian," as Kossuth had termed him, ended his own life with a pistol shot. He had pleaded even for the "murderers" because he knew that in an ocean of Teutons and Slavs Hungarians were a constantly endangered island.

Shall I plead, too, even for the murderers? There is an almond tree in my tiny London garden and when in spring it bursts into flower, I remember the slopes of Mount St. Gellert, rising in the centre of Buda, with their orchards and their triumphant blaze of pink, white and red. In the middle of this tremendous war I find myself hunting for Hungarian names and cities in newspapers, magazines and books. Sometimes, very late at night, I hear the music of my country coming over the air, and my pulse quickens. It is difficult to speak of all this—because though we are so much more articulate than Anglo-Saxons, facile small-talk so often hides what we do not dare to disclose.

No one can be neutral in this war, which is really a series of revolutions and therefore may last a very long time. No one can shut his eyes, his ears, his mind to the issues that are at stake. Never have they been more clearly defined. Nor can I be a neutral. In the humble way of those who wield the pen I had taken up arms long before the shooting started. Yet—may I too ask that I shall be allowed to show my loyalty on other fronts than against my own people? Hungarian

politicians have been stupid, cowardly, dishonest. A few months after they had signed a pact of eternal friendship with Jugoslavia, they marched against her to regain territory which might have been won back by peaceful negotiations. When Count Paul Teleki—a great scientist but an amateur politician, in spite of his two premierships—committed suicide, it was a helpless gesture of humiliation. Hungarians marched once more against Russia. Only the historian will be able to tell whether and to what extent were they blackmailed or terrorized into these crimes. It is not my task to make excuses for them or to analyse their motives. But as for the people in the "glass prison," the peasants, workmen, students, intellectuals—for them the ancient song of the *kuruc* fighters is still the slogan of conviction:

"Oh Magyar, think no German true,
No matter how he flatter you . . ."

Only this time there was no flattery. Bayonets, tanks, aeroplanes have no need to flatter.

So when I speak of Hungary in these pages, you must believe me that I speak of a country still worthy of understanding and sympathy.

III

Most of the turmoil and anguish in Hungarian mentality was the outcome of her position between East and West. Of all the motley tribes which swarmed from Asia into the bowl of the Carpathians, the Magyars alone were able to establish a stable nation. All the others had vanished. The Avars, Huns and the rest were annihilated and left no trace because they would not give up their nomadic habits nor embrace Christianity. But the Hungarians dug their heels into the fertile black soil between Danube and Tisza, they braced their backs against the onslaught of Tartar and Turk and faced West.

It was a hard choice and perhaps an unconscious one, but they stuck it for a thousand years. A great many times during the first six or seven centuries it would have been so much easier to yield to the flood of Asia. Turk and Tartar were closer kin than Teuton or Slav. For a hundred and fifty years the Crescent destroyed monasteries, palaces and mansions.

The descendants of the original Magyars were reduced in numbers, intermarried with Turks, Germans, Slavs. Except for a very few families hardly any of the followers of Arpad, the first tribal leader, were left. Yet the atmosphere of the Carpathian basin seemed to have a strange effect on the non-Hungarians. They were swiftly assimilated and a great many of them became even more fiercely nationalistic than the original descendants of the seven tribes. Some of the greatest Hungarian writers and poets were of Slav or German origin. The language of the intelligentsia, of the nobility and the law, continued to be Latin well into the nineteenth century—yet the spirit of law and literature alike was intensely, aggressively Magyar.

In spite of all the half-baked and totally unsupported charges brought chiefly by German historians, Hungary did not want to enter the war of 1914–18. Of the Imperial Cabinet Count Stephen Tisza, the Gladstone of Hungary, was the only member who protested against the unnecessary humiliation of Serbia. He, a Calvinist and a stiff-necked upholder of the Magyar Constitution, knew well that a German victory would be disastrous for his country and a German defeat would lead to its dismemberment. When he was overruled, he soon vanished from the political scene, only to be murdered by drunken soldiers in October, 1918.

Yet the struggle between East and West, which had for many centuries been an armed conflict, was not ended—it had only been transposed to the spiritual battlefield. The fiercely chauvinistic literary movements of the eighteen-forties, which had produced some of the greatest Hungarian masterpieces, were followed by a lukewarm period in which few really talented writers appeared. The renaissance of Hungarian literature came near the end of the nineteenth century and is still intensely alive. And with it also began a new ideological war between East and West.

It was not enough, said these poets, critics and novelists, that Hungary should have chosen the West in 1001 when the first King, St. Stephen, was crowned by the Holy See. While it must retain all its national characteristics, Hungarian literature must be imbued with the spirit of the West. It must divest itself of superficial patriotism, it must open the gates to the Western schools of thought, it must boldly experiment with form and idea. A group of young men founded *West*, a review

which had a vital influence through almost four decades. To-day these young men are either dead or have become academicians. Their revolutionary aims are outdated; but their work was inestimable.

Their leader—and his leadership persisted after his death in 1919—was Endre Ady, a poet practically unknown in Western countries. His was a genius which must remain a closed book to the rest of the world. Poetry cannot be effectively translated, except in the rarest cases and Ady's poems are the translator's despair. In English and German, their concise ideology, their rich almost Oriental pattern of imagery becomes colourless and enigmatical. I have tried to use them in order to arouse the enthusiasm of many English and French critics but in vain. Yet without the crippling barriers of language, the unsurmountable obstacles of an idiom which only fifteen million people understand, he would rank with Byron or Shelley, with Keats or Poe. He was, as an eminent German critic said of Shakespeare, " not one man but all Mankind." Perhaps I can explain his poetry by comparing it with the music of Kodály and Bartók, the two modern Magyar composers whose work is best known abroad. They, too, went back to the soil for inspiration. Saintly, thin-faced Bartók and bearded, dreamy-eyed Kodály had roamed for decades the more distant corners of Hungary with a primitive recording apparatus and big note-books; they brought back treasures of folk-music that had been buried under the shifting sands of centuries. Though the medium in which they presented and elaborated this ancient music was ultra-modern, its roots went back to the beginnings.

Ady, too, was a completely modern poet, but his language was often that of the Bible, of the unhappy Hungarian *kuruc*-soldiers who " shed their blood between two pagans for the one motherland." The ancient version of the Bible in Magyar is as rich and lovely as that of King James. And the soldiers who bled so long and so unhappily were fighting against both Turk and German—the two pagans. In Ady's rhymes the music and the rhythm were often harsh. For many years the staid critics and impatient pseudo-intellectuals laughed at him; but the matter was as ancient as the dreams and sorrows of the uncouth horsemen who came swarming through the Carpathian passes and settled in the plains.

Ady and his followers maintained that Hungary must turn to the West for inspiration, westernize her thinking, her political

ideologies; must get rid of pseudo-patriotism and German influence. Not Austria but Britain and France should be her sources of culture. At the same time she must retain her national characteristics and deal frankly with her own very grave problems.

When elderly Hungarians talk of the period between 1867 and 1914 they sigh nostalgically for "the good old days of peace." There was a sort of false prosperity, while a backward country gradually became industrialized. There was peace, certainly, for after the disastrous defeat of 1866, Austria did not embark on any large-scale military venture (the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina did not involve large-scale fighting). In 1896, the Millenary Exhibition, commemorating the thousand years of Hungary's existence, enabled thousands of foreign visitors to discover for themselves that Europe actually did not end at Vienna! There were fierce battles in parliament and in the interparliamentary committee composed of Hungarian and Austrian M.P.s—but these did not cause more than ripples in the placid pond of Magyar life. Food was plentiful, jobs could be got easily and there was little uncertainty about the future. No wonder that self-satisfaction became rampant and that change was violently opposed in every field. But Ady and his "Westerners" wanted to change the evil underneath the surface. One of their group, Zsigmond Moricz, wrote the first of the books in which the peasant was treated not as a picturesque figure of an operetta chorus or the butt of slick city jokers but as a human being. Others, like Michael Babits, discovered that the Hungarian public was woefully ignorant of the great treasures of world literature which were available only in musty, ill-made translations and set to work to interpret moderns and classics in a new spirit. The Hungarian writer had to be always multilingual—not in his own writings but in his reading. Ady himself translated poems of Jehan Rictus, Verlaine, Baudelaire; Babits, Kosztolanyi and others delved deeply into the poetry of other nations. They knew very well that very few people would bother to learn Hungarian and that they would have to acquire English, French, German, Italian, Spanish in order to find contacts with the outside world. There was no small country in Europe where foreign authors found such an enthusiastic reception, where the work of Flaubert or Proust, Dostoievsky or Dickens was the subject of so much discussion. To this very day every Hungarian

publisher has on his lists just as many translations as Magyar authors.

Ady and the *West* won their fight—in spite of the present temporary return of the Middle Ages in Hungary. It was their tragedy, a typical Hungarian tragedy, that they themselves could find very small recognition in the West and that it was the facile "international" authors—and especially playwrights—who achieved success in the bookshops and in the theatres of Paris and London, New York and Berlin.

IV

Hungary has always been a desperately poor country. The explanation is simple; there are too many large estates in the possession of the big aristocratic families and—to a lesser extent—of the Catholic Church. Serfdom vanished only in 1848; but for all practical purposes it has survived in many counties to this very day. Farmers had small farms and large families. When the father of a numerous family died his small holding was divided into infinitestimal plots. The thrifty Svabians, settled in Hungary by the sagacious Queen Maria Theresa who had more than a dozen children herself, soon discovered this danger and introduced the fatal "*egyke*" system limiting their offspring severely to *one*. It was not until the nineteen-twenties that the Hungarian Government became aware of this dangerous mass-movement towards a steeply declining birth-rate. But even so the landless were too numerous. Hungary has an itinerant landworker population which some statisticians put as high as a quarter of a million. These "*kubikos*" wander from job to job and often do not see their families for years. They work for a pittance and their keep—usually cold bacon and a piece of coarse bread spiced with an onion—dreaming all the while of the few acres of land, the cow and the cottage which they will never possess. Their families often starve and their problem remains unsolved.

The large estates have another disadvantage. The landlord is often indifferent to the actual yield of the soil as long as he receives a certain income. He is unwilling to spend money on improvements, on expensive machinery; although some of the aristocrats have become "tractor-minded" and some old-fashioned blue-bloods were horrified when an Esterhazy opened a shop in Budapest to market his produce. The small farmer

maintains that if he had more land he would be only too glad to invest in intensive cultivation ; but as he is seldom allowed to own his farm, he refuses to spend his usually small capital on improvements which would benefit the landlord in the end.

Hungary is and always has been desperately poor. Yet she is one of the most fertile agricultural countries in Europe. Only half-hearted attempts at a land reform have been made and political considerations have guided the distribution of the land taken away—against ample compensation—from the huge estates. The " homes for heroes " were just as much a slogan in Hungary as everywhere else during the last war ; yet these homes are pitifully inadequate and the few acres going with them cannot provide the necessary income for the owner. As Hungary has been a predominantly agricultural country, the industrial worker has been treated more or less in the same way as the farm labourer—with the tragic difference that while the latter receives part of his wages in the produce of the soil, the former is paid equally badly in cash but without the additional hundredweights of grain or sides of bacon.

Again and again I took my foreign friends to Mezökövesd, the large and picturesque village in the foothills of the Northern Carpathians. It was a " show place," to be visited on Sunday mornings when every girl, boy or child, was dressed in his or her best finery. The girls wore many skirts embroidered in brilliant colours and shawls which were a joy to see ; the boys walked stiffly in their curious hats which were a cross between a topper and a bowler, with richly embroidered aprons swinging in front of their long white drawers and shiny black top-boots. Cameras clicked ; after Mass the foreign visitors went to the Village Centre where cheap and not too tasteful reproductions of these original costumes were for sale. During the week the village lived soberly, working hard in the fields or in the small, poky rooms of the cottages—on Sundays the whole place became the stage of a musical comedy with peasant lasses and lads enduring patiently the gaping of city folk.

Once I became curious as to what was really behind this peacock brilliance, this gaudy façade.

I went down to Mezökövesd one week in the company of a young and rather *précieux* poet. He had been writing verse in which he had expressed with considerable force his general mistrust of life and particular doubts about the wiles of Woman. His was a sensitive and over-cultured soul. When I returned to

Budapest, he stayed behind and speedily forgot his *Weltschmerz*. He became a member of the intrepid band of university students, writers and newspapermen who called themselves " Village Explorers " and tried to save the remnants of folklore while at the same time presenting a faithful picture of the Hungarian peasant's plight. Later he published a book called *Gaudy Misery*, which was the most mordant and scathing indictment of Magyar economy ever written in the last two decades.

Doctors who struggled to save the twenty-odd thousand people of this " shop-window village " from tuberculosis and other horrors, gave up the fight in despair. The hills around the valley were honeycombed with caves and a large proportion of the villagers lived in them because there was no rent to pay. The ancient *matyós*, the inhabitants of this district, had settled in " swarms," each separated by a hedge or a stream. Several of the streets of the present-day Mezökövesd were built in dried-out river-beds. The " swarms " had their own particular pattern of embroidery—like the tartan of the Scottish clans—which was used also in decorating the houses. They insisted on inbreeding, interpreting this in its narrowest sense—for the marriages were kept within one *street* and not one village or part of village. A few years ago the young men of one street fought gory battles with boys from another thoroughfare if the latter dared to court girls not from their own " swarm." The eugenic consequences of this curious tradition are plain to see and the tradition has proved too hardy for the authorities—after all, they cannot very well act as marriage brokers. Birth control is frowned upon by the Church and few peasants could afford its necessities. This inbreeding also explains to some extent why these peasants are still going about in folk costume when it has died out in most other districts. But it does not explain how their particular costume became " fashionable " and why their poverty-stricken village was turned into a human zoo to which foreign tourists are taken as a matter of course.

It was a Habsburg Archduchess who expressed her desire to " dress " a gay and dazzling " Opera Ball " in Budapest in the colourful garb of the *matyó* girls and boys. The ball was a success—and so was the local costume. Shrewd business men were quick to exploit the vogue, and as the ancient motives, the traditional methods of embroidery, were too complicated and too expensive, these had to be simplified and " rationalized," thereby losing all their genuineness and most of their beauty.

The skirts, aprons, hats, etc., of Mezökövesd were exported by the ell and rapidly became pseudo-art. They were made on the spot, but Mezökövesd had little profit from it. In the winter months young girls or elderly women were paid a daily wage of 3*d.* to 5*d.*, but sometimes this was reduced to 1½*d.* to 2*d.* And this was supposed to be a living wage. . . . The "most honest" employers paid 6*d.* to 7*d.* a day. . . . In summer-time when most of the men and women worked as sharecroppers, the daily wage leapt to 1*s.* or 1*s.* 6*d.*, only to fall again to the former low level when workers became more plentiful in the autumn. . . .

In the last two or three years some of the Mezökövesd youths revolted against their bitter fate. They refused to be displayed like rare animals, to be photographed, gaped at, prodded and paraded. Their reaction, however, was sad enough: they abandoned their colourful costume for cloth caps, pull-overs and nondescript city shoes and trousers. Their attitude was best expressed in a poem by one of the peasant poets whom Hungary produces fairly regularly; they appear in Budapest, are discovered by some newspaperman or critic, enjoy a brief popularity and then disappear into obscurity (which means drink and poverty) like a meteor.

The brief poem is almost nihilistic in its absolute negation of authority and social law.

"Should I work?
For whom?
Should I starve?
For what?
Should I doff my hat?
To whom?
Must I not spit?
Why not?
May I not steal?
Why not?
Should I pray?
O my God!"

And yet a handful of intellectuals have been fighting for the soul of Mezökövesd. The Hungarian sharecropper is frequently a "dwarf farmer," i.e. a peasant whose very few acres cannot feed even his own family; therefore at harvest-time he hires himself out to the nearest big estate—usually with his

whole family. But sometimes he has to wander far afield to find employment and this means that he is cut off for months from his priest and all those who take any real interest in his spiritual and physical welfare. The village priest of Mezökövesd took a long trip every summer to visit his parishioners and help them in their problems—though he could do but little. A professor of the local high school ran a sort of evening school; he had about 180 pupils, mostly sharecroppers' and their intellectual standard was surprisingly high. I remember one evening when there was a lecture about French Catholic authors and a peasant stood up, saying that he had read a book by Paul Bourget, and made shrewd comments on the ideas it contained. So much could be done but so little is done; because Hungary has always been poor and her limited resources have been often mismanaged.

V

Mezökövesd is just one village, a glaring example among thousands. The situation is little better in other districts even if the discrepancy between the Potemkin show put up for the foreigner and the dismal behind-the-scenes is smaller.

"But surely this is a happy city," an American writer told me when we were sitting in a restaurant high above the glittering lights of Budapest. The gipsy band was playing one of the loveliest songs of Magyar love and laughter; well-dressed people were sitting at the small tables drinking wine and eating exquisitely cooked food. I knew that to foreigners this scene had always an air of unreality; it reminded them too much of a Lubitsch film or a Maschwitz operetta. Hungary had much beauty and much genius; it would be easy by selecting facets of her life to foster the illusion that everything is perfect. But that afternoon I had attended a police court trial; a small book-keeper had been caught pilfering half-a-dozen spools of typewriter ribbon. The full value was about six shillings; he was sentenced to two months in prison and, of course, lost his job. He stammered something about having four children and a very small salary—and one child needed a pair of shoes badly. It was the usual uninteresting and commonplace case with which perhaps every court in every city of the world had to deal daily. But the judge delivered a long and passionate speech about the sanctity of property and the gratitude the

small book-keeper owed to his employer for being employed at all. So I decided to disturb the illusions of my American friend.

" I'll tell you a funny story," I said. " At least some people laugh at it—some just don't see the point. A well-to-do shopkeeper went to a marriage broker and explained that he had a pretty daughter who would receive a *dot* of ten thousand pengoes —that would be about two thousand dollars—and that he wanted a good husband for her who could keep her in comfort and modest luxury. The marriage broker said he had the very man and produced the photograph of a young doctor. But the shopkeeper frowned and said that doctors had to wait until they were forty before they could earn more than a crust of bread. The marriage broker thereupon recommended a young barrister who had a most promising future. But the shopkeeper refused to hear of him—barristers were notoriously briefless these days. The third candidate was a bank clerk, but the would-be father-in-law declared that so many banks went bankrupt that he would certainly not entrust the fate of his only daughter to a man who could lose his job at any moment. He also made some rather bitter and personal remarks about other eligible bachelors whom the broker put forward. In the end the marriage broker lost his patience : ' Well, what do you want for your miserable ten thousand pengoes ? ' he demanded,. ' a plumber ! ' "

I looked hopefully at the American, but he just stared, and said :

" I don't get it."

I thought that I might as well go the whole hog and try to explain the plight of Hungary in some detail.

" The Hungarian middle class," I began, " has had the worst deal of all the middle classes . . . not excepting the Germans. The Treaty of Trianon reduced the territory of the country by two-thirds. Let the ethnographers and politicians dispute about it whether rightly or wrongly—you are, I am sure, not interested in this aspect of the matter. But of course when the Czechs, Jugoslavs, Rumanians took over the ceded territories, the first thing they did was to sack all the Hungarian civil servants —provided these had not fled before. In an unending stream they came—the doctors, lawyers, judges, police inspectors, tax-collectors, teachers. For almost three years there was a fair-sized town on wheels on the outskirts of the Budapest railway termini. Building had stopped during the war and people had

to pay immense sums to get a flat or even a single room. These " waggon cities " were without heating or sanitation; a dozen people had to live through the severe Hungarian winter in a cattle truck which lacked the most primitive amenities. Slowly the refugees were absorbed in the learned professions or the civil service; naturally they had first claim on a State to which they had shown their loyalty by giving up their homes in the territories which Hungary lost. At the same time most of the universities in these districts moved to mutilated Hungary and continued their courses. You may have heard in Budapest the expression, ' he is a man with a diploma.' That was the criterion of respectability, of middle-class achievement. If someone had a ' diploma,' a degree, he was supposed to have provided for his old age, to have ensured for himself a slow but steady progress on the ladder of promotion until he could retire with a reasonable pension. When fond Hungarian parents said: ' Charlie's going to be a doctor ' or ' We'll try and make Johnny a tax inspector ' they knew that after the hard work of sixteen years or so their son would be able to fend for himself and even support his father and mother. The anti-Jewish laws introduced a ' numerus clausus ' of five per cent. at the universities, but even so the number of Gentiles who acquired the necessary degrees for civil service employment or an independent professional career was ten, twenty times as big as the number of jobs. Huge slices of the middle-class became proletariatized. They kept up a brave fight against the lowering of standards but it was a hopeless battle. As the supply surpassed the demand, wages and salaries were cut to the bone. Fifty dollars a month was considered to be munificent for a young man of thirty-five. Doctors earned about twenty, several years after they had triumphantly posed for their graduation pictures. That was the reason why a plumber who had a reasonable chance of earning his living became such a much more desirable catch than a barrister or a second secretary in the Office of Works. . . . Do you get it now? "

I had noticed that my friend was getting restive during this long discourse. Now he shook his head.

" This sure is a crazy country," he remarked. " You mean that all these people in the cafés and restaurants are earning just chicken feed? Then how can they afford to go to all these swell joints? "

" Well, that is part of our craziness," I laughed. " A Hun-

garian cheerfully starves for the better part of a week or lives on cold potatoes so that on Saturday he can go to his favourite café or a movie or a concert. We are the exact opposite of the Englishman—so much of our life is show, outward prosperity, swagger. To keep up appearances means a hundred times more to us than to the most ambitious suburban housewife, anxious to outdress and outdo Mrs. Smith or Jones or whatever her particular rival is called. . . ."

I saw that the American did not believe me, but I was too tired to continue his education. But when I walked home through the darkened streets to my flat I fell to thinking how poisonous and fatal this state of affairs was. In my own profession the abuses were just as flagrant. Only a handful of writers could live by writing books. Most of them had to eke out their meagre earnings by journalistic work, translations or a totally different job. I analysed in my mind the contributors to a recent anthology of poetry. About half of them were clerks in private firms, the rest civil servants, university students (each with a heart-breaking job to keep him alive) or cub reporters. Their crime was youth—but even when they became elderly there was no security for them.

Was it snobbishness or just a helpless clinging to traditions which sent them to the universities, which made them slave at uncongenial tasks so that at the end of four or five years they could—do what? They certainly could not afford to marry. At one time in the late nineteen-twenties long articles were published in the conservative Budapest papers about the immorality of youth. "Free Love was the order of the day." The boys and girls who rowed upstream on the Danube every Saturday afternoon were accused of shocking sexual laxity. You could rent rooms by the hour in every Budapest street—"love nests" where for a few hours beggar-boy and down-at-heel girl could forget the problems of the morrow. But what could they do? The severe rules against employing married women were adopted with alacrity by the Hungarian Civil Service, and many of the private employers. But even if a girl managed to retain her position—and her salary was desperately needed to balance the slender budget—she certainly could have no children. And so, of course, middle-class youth was "immoral"—for you cannot sentence a whole class to celibacy . . . at least not in the Magyar sunshine. Another campaign was started against the doctors who "helped" girls in trouble;

but the campaigners forgot to provide a plan for feeding and clothing the babies which they expected to be born. I knew several highly respectable doctors who performed such operations without the slightest scruple and with a deliberate defiance of the law—because they were humane and knew clearly that by quelling unborn life they were the most merciful.

As jobs were so scarce and badly paid it was only natural that intrigue, back-biting, denunciation should be rampant in every office. Mistrust and sheer necessity compelled fundamentally decent men and women to work against each other. If a translator, for instance, undertook a job of work at a certain rate, sooner or later the publisher was certain to find someone who offered to do it cheaper. And few employers could resist the opportunity to save overheads when someone offered them the possibility.

But were all these hundreds of thousands, young and elderly, married or single, really unhappy? I did not think so while I lived among them. Few human beings have the capacity of sustained gloom; you cannot feel desperate for twenty-four hours in the day. And happiness was comparatively cheap in Budapest. For twopence you could ride in a tram or bus to the close vicinity of green fields and gentle mountains; for sixpence you could get a night's lodging in some mountain hostel; wine and food did not cost too much and the air, God's air, was free. In winter the slopes of the Buda hills were black with skiers. There was no need to queue up at the concert-halls and theatres; if you bought your ticket early enough you could get in, as even the gallery seats were reserved. Clothes were a problem; yet the family semptress who came to the house and often created masterpieces at sweat-shop rates helped to dress even the little typist earning fifteen shillings a week quite attractively. The Danube was free, too; four or five would band together to buy a slim rowing-boat and spend the week-ends (which did not begin until late Saturday afternoon) on the river. They were happy because they seldom bothered to think about the future. Their tragedies were transient, passing in a flash; their love affairs equally fleeting. Nobody was condemned to loneliness—of all evils the hardest to cure.

Yes, perhaps they would have been ready to forgive the "murderers," but not the Jews. The Hungarian Jewish problem was something quite special, utterly different from the German or the Russian question. About five per cent. of the

Magyar population were Jews; at least another five per cent. were half- or quarter-Jews. Unfortunately the bulk of them had settled in the cities, especially in Budapest, where their percentage rose to twenty or even twenty-five. For many centuries they had been barred from owning or leasing land and from most of the arts and crafts. So their agility of mind, their business acumen and clannish loyalty had to find outlet in channels which the average Magyar despised—or in the so-called free professions. They were represented in great numbers in journalism, literature, the stage and the cinema, in commerce and banking. Of course the greater number were poor, desperately so, and hard-working. When they attained success, it usually went to their heads. They were unable to be modest; a little childishly, a little unpleasantly, they flaunted their good fortune. They were too loud in their happiness. They became abnormally sensitive to slights, real or imaginary; for centuries of degraded ghetto life cannot be sublimated in a few decades. Their achievements seemed to be too easily won; their facile intellectual superiority was inevitably galling to a slow-thinking peasant people. It was not, however, the peasant who resented them most. The small Jewish shopkeeper might have been a usurer and exploiter in some districts; but as a rule he shared the general poverty and helped where he could. When, early in the twentieth century, an absurd "blood charge" was whipped into mass hysteria—a young Gentile girl had disappeared and the Jews were accused of having committed a gruesome murder—one of the shrewdest and most conservative lawyers of Hungary stepped forward to defend the accused—poor and bewildered village Jews—against the monstrous slander. He was a member of the landed gentry, a writer of distinction—yet, like Zola, he did not hesitate to risk his popularity, indeed his very existence, to become a champion of truth. No, it was among the Hungarian middle classes and especially the Budapest people who found themselves relegated to a secondary position, that resentment against the successful, affluent Jew was chiefly to be found. From this class were recruited the White Terrorists, after the collapse of the short-lived Soviet Republic in Hungary; they swelled the ranks of the Hungarian Nazi Party. As I write the Hungarian Quisling is still in prison; Major Szálasi, whose half-baked ideas are even wilder and less constructive than Hitler's, is—most significantly—not a Hungarian at all, but a Magyarized Armenian.

The Jews fought in great numbers and fought well both in the Hungarian War of Independence in 1848–9 and in the first World War. But it could not be denied that there were many Jews also among the profiteers who supplied paper-soled boots and uneatable tinned food to the armies; and the brief Communist régime also had some Jewish leaders. Perhaps the proportion of these criminals and political extremists was larger than the Jewish percentage of the population; in any case, the first movement which selected the Jew for a political scapegoat in post-war Europe was that of Admiral Horthy. Yet after a couple of years the outrages on Jews stopped almost completely. Many a leading Hungarian family had a skeleton in its cupboard —a Jewish grandmother. The young Hungarian aristocrats of fifty years ago were as keen to marry pretty Jewesses with suitable dowries as Edwardian peers were apt to marry chorus girls. Sometimes these Jewesses had not even a dowry; the story of Cinderella and Prince Charming was repeated frequently in Magyar life. It was scarcely surprising, therefore, that when, under Nazi influence, the Hungarian Premier was piloting the first anti-Semitic laws through Parliament, he should discover that he himself was affected by some of the clauses. Naturally enough he resigned, yet to this day—such is the paradoxical condition of Central Europe—he continues to be one of the pillars of Hungary's Nazi Party. While Bela Imredy's predicament sent the enemies of Hungary into paroxysms of laughter, it also revealed the obstacles to any thorough-going anti-Semitic policy in Hungary. It was brought to light that even the wife of Admiral Horthy was descended from a Jewish grandmother and handbills were distributed calling upon Rebecca to " Get out of the Royal Castle ! " (Rebecca is a typically Jewish name in the country, and when Daphne Du Maurier's best-seller was translated into Hungarian, the title had to be changed to *The Lady of Manderley*). The police took swift action, but when the Regent and Madame de Horthy visited the Opera House, the slogan was shouted down from the gallery. Legend has it that the old admiral rushed from his state box, ran up the stairs and boxed the ears of the youthful Nazis with his own Serene Hands. Nor was the problem made easier by the fact that at least two of Hungary's Roman Catholic bishops were of Jewish birth, as was one of the greatest Roman Catholic poets, a learned priest and university professor.

When Hitler marched into Austria and the Reich became

Hungary's next-door neighbour, it was natural that the Hungarian Nazis should feel strong enough to demand the introduction of the Nuremberg laws. They did not succeed, however, at least not at first. The cabinet of Count Paul Teleki, who came to such a tragic end, was hostile towards the Jews, but on the other hand it jealously guarded the national superiority of the Magyars. When half a dozen M.P.s tabled a bill giving full autonomy to the inconsiderable German minority in the land, their action was denounced as high treason, and they were expelled from Parliament. The first anti-Jewish laws were only feeble echoes of Hitlerite Germany's thorough-going regulations. They reduced the numerous clauses, introducing it also in the corporations of lawyers, physicians, journalists; they provided for the dismissal of Jewish civil servants and army officers, but recognized to a certain extent the "Gentility" of baptized Jews. In commerce and industry their provisions were much harsher; the number of Jewish employees could not exceed twenty per cent. in any firm, nor could the proportion of salaries and wages exceed this ratio. Thousands of small clerks were thrown into the street so that the Jewish general manager might retain his large salary. All over the country "re-training schools" were opened in which Gentile farmers, unskilled workers, were made into civil servants, book-keepers and journalists. The confusion was considerable, and for a time the enforcement of the law was relaxed. But as German influence gained ground the penalties became more severe, the difficulties for Jews greater. They were also, to some extent, in a more unfortunate position than the German, Austrian or Czech Jews. These had first call on the sympathy and charity of the world. When immigration quotas were fixed, they were naturally favoured—their persecution had started earlier, their lot was harder than that of the Magyar Jews. Only a very small percentage of these were able to get to Palestine or to America. Most of them remained to struggle with the ever-growing restrictions, facing a future which deteriorated steadily into hopelessness. The second anti-Jewish law provided for the notorious labour camps—in which it was considered an economic proposition to use Jewish writers, skilled technicians, doctors and professional men to dig trenches and carry heavy loads. Most of these camps were considerably more humane than Buchenwald or Dachau—but they were humiliating enough for people who had done their best to serve their country and

were now denied the distinction of service in the army. . . . For the labour camps took the place of the compulsory military training which Hungary had introduced many years before the removal of the clauses of the Trianon Treaty that forbade her to do so. Officially for almost a decade there was no compulsory military service in Hungary—but if a young man tried to evade it, his passport was forfeited, he was sacked from his job and finally two gendarmes appeared "to persuade him gently." As Hungary was always poor, the life of these "volunteers" was rather unpleasant; during the year I spent in the Hungarian Signal Corps we had about one bucketful of coal *a week* with which to heat a barrack-room, fifty feet by sixteen; the food was nauseating. Still, most young people certainly preferred this period of training—lasting usually about twelve months—to the labour camps, although from the start Jews were not allowed to serve in any branch of the army except the infantry.

It would be false to say that the best Hungarian writers, musicians, actors were Jews—but a great many of them were. Ferenc Molnár, the wittiest of all European playwrights, author of *Liliom*, *The Devil*, *Olympia* and a score of other successful comedies, was of Jewish origin. So were Ferenc Körmendi and Yolanda Földes, both winners of international prizes; Ernö Szép, one of the finest poets and novelists, Frederick Karinthy, the humorist-philosopher whose startling *Journey Around my Skull* swept America. Paul Abraham, most popular of Hungary's modern song hit composers, Gitta Alpar, the singer, Alexander Korda, the film producer—the list could be continued indefinitely. Jews though they might be, they regarded themselves nevertheless as Hungarians, and whatever successes they achieved abroad, however affluent they became, they longed for the lights of Budapest, the homely gossip of the cafés. Barred from making a living in their native land, derided and abused in the Hungarian Nazi Press, they had perforce to turn in sorrow—if they were able to do so—to foreign fields. Within Hungary a corporation or chamber was set up to include all writers and journalists. One of its sections, which contained some of the most brilliant essayists and leader-writers, had for president a well-meaning Aryan gentleman, an M.P. and a professor of the Budapest University of Technology. He had never made the slightest contact with literature, nor had he written a single line apart from technical articles—but

he was set to lord it over hundreds of first-class brains, and that because his grandfather was a Gentile and the Prime Minister was his friend. One of the most important literary institutions in Hungary was the so-called Baumgarten Fund, the legacy of a rich and cultured literary gentleman who provided sufficient money to guarantee the minimum necessities of life every year for a dozen or so Hungarian *literati*. Recently the Hungarian Government prohibited the awards to any Jews. It was typical of Hungary that in the last year one of the awards was nominally made to a critic who was also a high Civil Servant and that he returned the money secretly so that it could be paid to a Jewish writer who was in serious financial difficulties. But the principle itself, even if applied with rather less than the systematic cruelty of Nazi Germany, showed that Hungary was heading for the totalitarian abyss.

A few months ago a third law was passed forbidding the marriage of Jew and Gentile. This was still short of the Nuremberg laws as it did not dissolve automatically all Jewish and Aryan mixed marriages, nor did it determine, as strictly as Hitler had done, who was and who wasn't a Jew. Still, it must have brought unhappiness to hundreds of people. Many Hungarian Jews have become so assimilated—as indicated by the episode of Streicher and the Buda cantor's son—that they had none of the Jewish racial characteristics. Who would blame a Jewish girl with fair hair and blue eyes, who kept from her lover the secret of her distant origin? But this innocent deceit had now suddenly become a punishable offence. No, Hungary might forgive the "murderers," but never the Jews.

These anti-Semitic elements were at the same time totally irresponsible—they had scarcely changed since the early nineteen-twenties. It was about 1924 that two bright Aryan lads conceived the brilliant idea that by forging French banknotes they could revenge themselves on the country which, in their eyes, was chiefly responsible for the harsh treatment accorded to Hungary in 1919. Their motives were patriotic—though they were not averse to making a little profit out of them; after all, it was *their* brainwave. In most countries they would have tried some clumsy forgeries and then given up the idea. But in Hungary they were able to interest some of the extremist statesmen and civil servants in their project. By the time the stupid conspiracy was exposed—chiefly because the agents employed to place the forged banknotes were spending too freely and

behaving too ostentatiously—about fifty well-known personalities were involved.

The scandal rocked the whole of Europe. Hungarian workmen were expelled from France. The head of the Hungarian police was sentenced to a few months in prison, some of the defendants got two or three years. They had acted, the right-wing press argued, from purely patriotic motives. Perhaps it would have been better to plead insanity.

VI

It was about two months before the outbreak of the war that I saw my country for the last time. Budapest was gay with summer awnings; the terrace of the world-famous artificial wave bath was crowded with lovely girls tearing to pieces the reputations of their absent best friends and bronzed young men thinking about their next meal or next mistress. I had tried to keep my arrival a secret except from my nearest and dearest, but Budapest, in spite of its million inhabitants, was a small town. It sufficed to be seen in one literary café, and next morning the telephone of our hotel room began to ring incessantly. I found it impossible to refuse meetings. Most of these men and women had been my friends and companions-in-arms during the long, weary and glorious years of my youth; it would have been more than caddish to behave like a visiting celebrity, the local-boy-who-made-good, especially as my success abroad had been of a very modest kind indeed. And so my diary was filled with appointments and I drank innumerable black coffees or *spritzers*—light wine and soda water—while I was listening. All these people, boys and girls, greybeards and staid matrons, had schemes to propound, propositions to make which would secure certain riches for me and for themselves. All I had to do was (*a*) to get them into Britain, (*b*) find a British plutocrat to finance their plan. These plans varied from the marketing of a new kind of neon sign to the production of a five-act drama in blank verse. In the first two or three cases I tried to argue or explain, but it was of no use. They were all convinced that success was assured provided I could help them over the first negligible difficulties. They were not interested in realities; they knew nothing of the conference in Switzerland at which most countries refused even to discuss the proposed quota for Hungarian "refugees." After the fifth of my friends

had described in enthusiastic words how he or she proposed to "conquer" England, I gave up any attempt to convince them how wrong they were. It seemed kinder to promise to try and contact someone who would finance a factory for the production of bitter chocolate in Holland (no such chocolate was marketed in the Netherlands for the simple reason that the Dutch did not like bitter chocolate) or to interest Noel Coward in the plot for a revue. Their letters pursued me for months after I had returned to London; some even cabled or telephoned.

One evening I was sitting in a restaurant on the Danube embankment with some of my oldest friends, of whom five were Gentiles and three were Jews. One of the Jews, a solicitor, told me that he had never made more money than at the present moment, for his Jewish clients were employing him to help them to get out of the country or to find Christian "false fronts" for their businesses, to ensure for themselves at least the bare necessities of life. The second, an insurance salesman, said he was going to learn the art of block-making as he heard this craft was not over-crowded in Palestine; he had also saved sufficient money to enable him to be smuggled into that country. The third smiled and said that his doctor had given him only a year to live unless he could go to Switzerland. He had no intention, he added pensively, of going to Switzerland.

But the most startling attitude was that assumed by the five Gentiles. These young men had been friends since their earliest school days, they had worked and played together, fought each other, courted the same girls and shared the same adventures. Now something was happening, something unimaginable and violent, which was forcing them asunder, erecting a sudden wall of rigid prejudices. They were ashamed of their Christianity, of their Aryan family-trees. When the Jews had stopped talking, the Gentiles burst into a confused babble. They said that things were not so black as they looked; that there would be always a piece of good Hungarian bread in the country for decent Jews. They, of course, would not bow to the new regulations; they would not forsake their friends . . .

I thought of the young German actor who told me the same thing in 1933. And I remembered that, when I met him two years later—as in 1933, he was once again working on a picture in Vienna—he would not even return my greeting because I was sitting on the terrace of the Hotel Imperial with a well-known playwright who was not one hundred per cent. Aryan.

These five boys were decent fellows, but how many of them were heroes? To-day it might be easy to swear eternal friendship, but when the Nuremberg laws would be introduced into Hungary, would they, I wondered, risk prison, concentration camp or the loss of their jobs for the sake of an old friendship? That thought made the food taste bitter and the wine sour.

In a dim room, half-filled by two grand pianos and hung with Transylvanian embroideries, Bela Bartók, the great composer, talked to me about his fears for Hungary. He was bitter because so much publicity had been given to his refusal to allow his compositions to be performed in Italy and Germany. "I didn't do it because I wanted to be written up by some newspaperman," he said. "I did it because I felt compelled to show my sympathy with those who believe in freedom and equality—and the two totalitarian countries have forgotten what these things mean."

I asked him whether he was not afraid that his very outspoken opinions would get him into trouble—in the event of the Hungarian Nazis coming into power.

A smile lit up his thin, ascetic face with its finely spun silver hair. "I don't think so," he replied. "Kodály and I have a certain . . . reputation for being good Hungarians. Nor do I think the Hungarian Nazis will come to power. The present Hungarian Government is stealing their thunder and their policy —they do all the horrible things gradually instead of at once. . . . What use is music, art, literature, when men have gone mad?"

But it was a middle-aged Hungarian writer who gave me the most concise and revealing picture of Budapest and Hungary. He had written successful books and plays; he was a leader-writer on a Conservative revisionist daily, and he was an Aryan. Some of his critics called him the Hungarian Aldous Huxley, or even the Hungarian Proust, though he deprecated such flights of fancy; he was a deep thinker and a fine craftsman—a good European.

We were sitting in a small, quiet Buda café. Around us retired civil servants, free-lance journalists, politicians and business men were drinking coffee and reading the papers. You can spend as many hours as you wish in a Budapest café over a single drink—no one is ever in a hurry.

M., the writer who had lived long in Paris and Berlin, began to talk in a low, almost conspiratorial voice:

" Look around and I'll show you in miniature the secret of Hungary, perhaps the whole world—compressed and enlarged, yet as faithfully as if you were staring at the fishes, infusoria and worms of the deepest seas imprisoned in an aquarium. This café is perhaps the most modest and the quietest in our fair city. We are sitting behind the glass panes, we startling creatures, and like some of the deep sea fishes, we are emanating something. You want to know the nature of this emanation, this strange perfume? It is . . . *hate*. Look at that white-haired man with his kindly face, furrowed by dead passion, thinned by sorrow, chilled by resignation; he is bending over the newspaper with a pencil in his hand . . . and in a moment when no one is watching, he will scribble rude remarks on the margin of his paper because it represents political views opposite to his own. He is working secretly like the worm attacking the heart of an oak tree; sometimes he looks up innocently with his blue eyes before he jots down quickly some ribald insult as a marginal note to the last speech of the politician he dislikes most. Then he pushes away gently the newspaper. . . . Or look at that man there, he is fat and jovial, his head above his bow tie is just like Uncle Bunny's in the movies of our childhood days; his pockets are filled with toffee, his heart with loving-kindness, his fat lips wear a thoughtful, lenient smile. . . . But watch—the smile fades for a moment, the fat man has pulled a note-book from his pocket, wets his pencil, raises his eyebrows, purses his mouth and makes some notes in a careful, crabbed script. Do you know what the notes are about? They refer to an acquaintance of his who has just resigned from the party of which the fat gentleman is a most enthusiastic member. Now he is making a note of his name, adding it to all the others, so that he may remember them when—to-morrow or in a year's time—he can hang all his enemies."

" Really, you must exaggerate," I protested.

" On the contrary," he said, " I am far behind the truth. Hate is burning and festering in this café and in every café—it is just like the electric fan over the entrance, fanning passions, prejudices and animosities. Hate has become a profession, a mission, a life-task. People get up in the morning, clear their throats, brush their teeth and immediately begin to hate, as diligently and professionally as the great tenor practises his scales. The newspapers they open at the breakfast table are full of hate. The business man or politician thinks with hate

of the morning which he must spend in conciliating his business, social and political opponents. In the tram or bus people sit and stare, as if fascinated at the advertisements, while their lips move soundlessly; they are saying to themselves: 'Of course, Smith will have to be impaled . . . Shooting will be far too good for Jones.' Never before have men and women hated in this way. It is a cold hatred. We hate *à froid*."

"But hasn't it always been so? What about the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, the Thirty Years' War, the ingenious and thorough methods of the Inquisition?"

"That was different," my friend replied without hesitation. "In those passionate, great periods people hated as if performing a religious observance: they burned their neighbour at the stake, even if they drank together the day before—because he was a heretic. This hate was pure, it could be inhumanly cruel but it was always human in its enthusiasm. I grant mankind the right to hate in order to get to heaven or to send to hell those whom it considers unworthy of heaven. Nowadays our hate is much cheaper; we hate to further the interest of commonplace, tuppenny-ha'penny ends. People hate in order to get a job in which they can make an extra pound a week; they hate, almost selflessly, in order to prevent someone else from earning that extra pound; they hate because they cannot tolerate beauty or youth, success or talent. You know the saying of old Hungarian soldiers: 'If your sword is too short, add a step to it—get nearer to your enemy.' That was in a simple, romantic age. To-day we might say: if you are untalented, if you are too cowardly or weak for work, success, achievement or happiness—*hate more efficiently*. In teashops strangers stare at each other as if they were Guelphs and Ghibellines. But the Guelphs knew the Ghibellines—while we usually have no personal contact at all with the subject of our violent hate. We are able to hate nowadays by loudspeaker and headline. Hate has evolved a technique like that of the manufacture of optical instruments or an operation for appendicitis. We have our professional haters who receive high wages for their work; they appear daily and hate in public—like a pianist performing at a concert. We hate in the party headquarters, at political meetings, the platforms of scientific assemblies, but also in the bus and the nursery. . . . Isn't this enough? Shall we go to another café?"

I did not answer. I felt that every one of his words was an

accusation, a damning indictment not merely of Hungary but the whole of Europe.

M. dropped his voice still lower until it was scarcely above a whisper.

"How do you think this hate will end?"

"I wouldn't care to guess," I hedged.

"It will end," he said, "in universal destruction."

VII

Not very long afterwards I left Hungary for the last time before the outbreak of war. And once again the image of the glass prison arose in my mind; the place where people sit, dream and hate as prisoners behind the plate glass of the cafés. I can only pray that their awakening be gentler than their dreams.

Four

> The story of the two Tyroleans is well known. "Let's take a walk," one said, "around Austria." "No," replied the other, "I don't want to get back before lunch."
>
> *Told by* JOHN GUNTHER

> The Austrian doesn't think with his brain. He thinks with his diaphragm.
>
> ANTON KUH

TAIL WAGS DOG

I

THEY DID not kill Austria in 1919; they merely turned her into an idiot child with an immense head and a puny wizened body. Or perhaps she became a small mongrel dog with a big bushy tail and—poor creature—it was the tail which wagged the dog. Such metaphors leap to the mind as I try to give a concise description of Austria's twenty years of death struggle. She had become a prostitute, endeavouring to live, like a second, inferior Switzerland, on her tourist trade! What was there

behind her picturesque but misleading *Heuriger* inns, behind the exclusive international snobbery of the Semmering, the ski-runs of Kitzbühel and Zell-am-See, the health-resorts of Styria, the baroque of Salzburg or the cafés of Vienna? Not a country surely! *Pagliacci*, perhaps—on a large scale. Gaiety masking a broken heart. Elderly English patricians who took their children to Vienna after the war hoping to recapture the magic of the pre-1914 years, quickly realized that "something" was missing. The hotel porters were just as attentive as ever, the food was almost as good, the music as thrilling—and yet Vienna, the head of the idiot child, the tail that wagged the dog, had lost its spirit. Death was in most people's thoughts—even if they differed in their conception of Austria's final exit. Some thought that passing away would be almost painless if the tiger across the western frontier would swallow them up—others dreamed of a miracle which would save the disintegrating body at the last moment—but no one could really hope for complete survival.

Early in 1928 I went to Vienna to discuss with the author the production in Hungarian of *Jedermann*, the German version of the ancient *Everyman* Morality with which Hugo von Hofmannsthal, the Austrian poet, librettist of *Der Rosencavalier*, had enriched the programme of the Salzburg *Festspiele*. It was a moving and spectacular piece of work in which Moissi, the great Italo-German actor, achieved an annual triumph. While we were discussing some problems of translation, we came to the part of Death in the play which Hofmannsthal wanted to emphasize especially.

"You see," he told me, "almost everybody misunderstands *Everyman*. Sometimes even Reinhardt, the original producer, did. They assume that Everyman is the symbol of every human being because his desires, sins, passions are universal—because, however he curbs his instincts, he is greedy, frightened or magnanimous like everybody else. This ancient English morality play which I re-wrote, has its universal human values in a quite different point—the fight against Death. As his resistance weakens steadily, as he drifts closer and closer towards the whirlpool of Death—until in the end he longs for it as for a good friend, a beloved well-wisher . . . *that* is human and enduring in the play. Our whole life is a struggle against Death—but we never win in the end. Why, then, are we fighting?"

A year later, in the spring of 1929, I saw him once more. He looked tired. His erect, almost Prussian figure had acquired

a slight stoop. We sat on a café terrace, discussing Remarque's *All Quiet* . . . and the spate of war novels which had begun to appear in Germany. From that, the talk drifted to the value of human life, the fundamental measuring of all wartime philosophy. Hofmannsthal suddenly said:

"There are things, of which one shouldn't talk, for every word is sacrilegious—or a *lèse majesté*. Do you regard human life as an abstract idea of philosophy? Do you suppose that the French *poilu* or the British Tommy cares a damn about the after life? Even we who strove and still strive for something new in literature and art, lapse into clichés when we speak about death. That is the strange power of death: it is so commonplace, so final, that it's impossible to say anything new about it, nor can you revolt against it."

Within a month of this soliloquy, death came to Hugo von Hofmannsthal. He died of a heart-stroke at the age of fifty-five. His son, Franz von Hofmannsthal, had shot himself at his desk and his father's heart could not stand the shock.

II

Vienna was only a few hours' journey from Budapest and it served always as the first or last stage of my peregrinations in Europe. I was intimate with its cafés, those shabby and comfortable caves in which wit flickered, like Roman candles, into brief glory and nothing was sacred. I knew some of the writers, poets and publicists who spent the greater part of their waking hours in these cafés. There were the "Imperialists," the clique of the Hotel Imperial, over whom René Fülöp-Miller, historian and mystic, presided. Another group met at the "Grand," still another at the Sacher. Sometimes Stefan Zweig came down from his lovely house on the Moenchsberg to visit the opera and his friends. Franz Werfel loved to discuss religion; he was one of the few Jews who had embraced Roman Catholicism from fervent conviction. His new religion permeated all his works. Joseph Roth was only a bird of passage, as he spent comparatively little time in Vienna. Paul Frischauer, who had been night-editor, stockbroker, gasworks manager and secretary to the foreign department of a Viennese bank, was usually deep in some historical argument or abusing the producer of his latest documentary play. Once I had the great fortune to meet Arthur Schnitzler, ex-physician and most gentle yet merciless dissector of human hearts and passions. *Anatole* and

Liebelei made him world-famous, but he himself thought much higher of his short stories, in which Vienna was embalmed with its " Schlamperei," its sudden tragedies and eternal love-making. Sometimes Hermann Bahr's big square beard appeared and his small kindly eyes gleamed with innocent malice. Roda-Roda, ex-officer, playwright and film actor, sported his famous red waistcoats, and related some recently discovered anecdote about Francis Joseph. Anton Kuh, perhaps the wittiest and strangest of Viennese poets, sat in a corner waiting for someone to pay for his dinner. He earned large amounts by his lectures, but usually spent all that he had earned within twenty-four hours. He had evolved a highly successful and original black-mailing system, relieving speculators and bankers of their " filthy lucre " in a manner which made them feel that it was an honour to assist a genius in reduced circumstances. Or Fritz Grünbaum and Karl Farkas came in, the leading spirits of Viennese cabaret and revue, whose every word was a witticism and who could turn the most serious literary discussion into a feast of parody and satire. Egon Friedell, too, lived in the cafés of the Ring—a figure whose strange duality explained much of Vienna's contradictions and surprising revelations. For Friedell was a comic actor and writer of farce in one of his " lives," and at the same time responsible for a series of learned tomes on cultural history, translated into every European language and accepted as one of the great achievements of Austrian spirit in our century. Apparently, he found nothing strange in this Jekyll-and-Hyde arrangement, and those who knew and loved Vienna accepted it as normal and natural. Fritz Grünbaum was murdered by the Nazis in a concentration camp and Friedell committed suicide.

It was only seldom that one could meet in these circles Anton Wildgans, a former director of the Burgtheater and one of Austria's most sensitive poets. He had a little house in Mödling, where he lived for his books, his music and his garden. Yet his poetry was not at all that of the Ivory Tower; he felt a deep compassion for the poor and the fallen, while his plays—some of them in delicate, yet expressive verse—dealt with the problems of profane and sacred love. I spent three years in translating a volume of sonnets called *Die Sonnette an Ead*, and my finest reward was the privilege of spending a few days with the poet in his retreat. He was intensely shy and hid his unhappiness about the fate of his beloved Austria from almost everybody. But one evening in the garden at Mödling he said :

" They are pushing us back into the Balkans . . . Vienna is an anachronism. We are all chasing ghosts and trying to make ourselves believe that they are alive. But how long will it last ? "

In this world of unrealities, in this city which had no hinterland, only a crippled country living on its tourist trade and the precarious goodwill of Benito Mussolini, the only reality was make-believe. That explained perhaps why the Viennese Opera and the Burgtheater played such a disproportionate part in the communal life. The Viennese were split into passionate parties over the respective merits of rival tenors ; the way Maria Nemeth had sung *Aïda* last night or an Italian guest soprano had performed in *Rigoletto* was the subject of heated discussions on the trams, in the cafés, workshops and private homes. The " Theater in der Josephstadt," which Reinhardt had raised to a standard unsurpassed in Europe, had a continuous run of successes for many years. The performances were criticized with the same acumen and expert understanding by a baker's boy in the gallery or a bank manager in the front stalls. The three Thimigs—father, son and daughter, the latter Mrs. Reinhardt in subsequent years—were only the nucleus of a brilliant repertory company in which every actor and actress was a fine instrument for the master's hand. The first talkies that came from the Vienna studios made Hollywood's pictures look and sound cheap and silly. Journalism had a reputation which was given free scope by the fifty or sixty pages of the Sunday papers. If all this was ephemeral, smoke upon water, shadow on a screen, it showed that a country robbed of realities must escape into the world of make-believe.

III

My father was the first journalist who received permission after the collapse of Austria-Hungary to begin research work in the immense *Haus Hof und Staatsarchive*, the secret archives of the Habsburgs. These had been naturally barred to everyone for many centuries as they contained the most carefully guarded secrets of the Habsburg Monarchy. As my father was allowed to take some of the material away to be copied for publication, for many months our flat in Budapest was filled with faded ancient documents, reports, secret memoranda.

How important the secrets of these archives were was shown by the stipulation one of the former subject states of the Monarchy

made in the peace treaty of St. Germain—this country was to be entitled to select all documents referring to it and its subjects, and remove them to its own new capital. Lorry loads of these papers rumbled through the streets of Vienna towards the north-east. The new republic would take no chances of anything being discovered in the archives detrimental to its reputation.

For a long time I worked on these documents, copying, classifying and filing. It was a strange experience—a faint odour of decay, of long-past unhappiness and passion rose from them, and ghosts flitted over my shoulder.

Somehow I felt that all the brand-new totalitarian régimes were rank amateurs compared to the " police state " over which Francis Joseph had ruled for sixty odd years. These reports betrayed how closely, how incessantly anybody of importance was watched in Austria-Hungary. Her bureaucracy was an efficient ancestor of the Gestapo, and among her secret agents—especially in the years between 1850 and 1870—you could find, in a motley company, archbishops, chief constables and prostitutes. Individual initiative was frowned upon and discouraged. No wonder that when this steady, unrelenting pressure of authority was removed Austria was unable to find her place in the world. The Habsburgs had been more than a dynasty: they had been a philosophy. There has never been a less competent ruler than Francis Joseph; no emperor survived so many blunders and tragedies. Narrow-minded, bound by the conventions of the feudal eighteenth century, he was the epitome of inefficiency. And this, in spite of the fact that he rose every morning at four-thirty, signed innumerable documents and attended endless reviews, parades and conferences. He disliked intellectual brilliance—no wonder that his wife became an eternal wanderer until the anarchist's dagger ended her life at Territet; no wonder that his first-born son committed suicide at Mayerling when the tangle of life and love seemed to be insoluble. Francis Joseph lived too long. He survived almost everybody whom he could trust, and in the icy loneliness of his old age he made one mistake after the other, or permitted his ministers to make them.

There is an anecdote, not particularly funny yet intensely characteristic, which epitomizes the Habsburg futility. Francis Joseph was inspecting the cadets of a famous Viennese military school. Among them was a coal-black youth from Haiti. The Emperor stopped in front of him and asked:

" Oh . . . you are a Negro, aren't you ? "

" Yes, Your Majesty."

" Excellent . . . well, continue it . . . continue it diligently . . ."

About twenty years later I was watching the present pretender to the Austro-Hungarian throne inspecting some Hungarian boy scouts in Holland. He was a pleasant young man, a little stout, a little loose-limbed, but handsome and vivacious. Yet when he went the round of the camp, addressing about a dozen boys, it was always the same question he asked : " Where's your contingent from ? " When he received the answer, he nodded as if he had gathered extremely valuable information and then moved on. Somehow I felt that the Habsburgs deserved the same verdict which was passed on the Bourbons : " They have learned nothing and forgotten nothing."

On Vienna and Austria the mark of the Habsburgs seemed to be indelible. All the politicians who tried to save the country after 1918 were living in the shadow of those coffins in the *Kapuzinergruft*, from Seipel to Dollfuss, from Stahremberg to Schuschnigg. The innumerable films and operettas—*The Congress Dances* and *Zum Weissen Rössl* were perhaps the best examples—were all building up a romantic, attractively misleading picture of the good old days when " *die Schrati* " was the Emperor's platonic mistress and one of the Strausses was playing in the ballrooms.

This lingering atmosphere of faded glory and ceremonial I found most strikingly embodied in the Vienna hotel where I usually stayed. It was on the corner of the Rotenturmstrasse, the centre of Vienna's West End. Its first owner, Herr Hess, had been a Hofrat and President of the Austrian Hotelkeepers' Association. Everywhere was gilt and Venetian glass, Persian carpet and heavy silver, and the hall porter never failed to remember and give due emphasis to a title, even when—under the Republic—it had long lost its significance. (The new Austria was democratic enough to do away with the counts, barons and princes.) The son of the old Hofrat who had inherited three hotels and a long family tradition was a tall, heavy man who moved silently, wore a white necktie and spoke in a deferential whisper. After I had stayed at the hotel about a dozen times and had met Herr Hess at one or two international *hotelier* conferences, I arrived in Vienna one summer evening to find an invitation in my room, to dine with old Frau Hess,

the present owner's mother, in her private apartment. I asked my wife to dress very carefully and to prepare for a long evening of reminiscences—a visit to a long-vanished world. We were conducted with great ceremony to Frau Hess's rooms at the top of the building, where we were received by Herr Hess with his soft smile and white stock. Immediately inside the apartment a very old, short, white-haired lady greeted us as if we were an archducal pair. The table was laid with damask, crystal and silver; two soft-footed servants moved silently about, and the dinner was the best I had ever tasted in Vienna. Wines of ancient vintage were produced reverently—and the talk was all about the Habsburgs. Visiting princes had stayed at this hotel, and been received by Frau Hess with the same courtesy and painstaking attention. She had been a good friend of the famous Frau Sacher who, smoking a cigar and holding very determined rules about etiquette and morality, presided over her famous hotel and still more famous kitchen. She told us how Frau Sacher refused accommodation to a Russian Duke because he was known to have divorced his wife under rather scandalous circumstances. For almost three hours she related anecdote after anecdote, all dealing with members of the imperial family and the glittering life which had "gone with the wind." I remarked that she must find the world sadly changed.

"I don't know much about it," she said. "You see, I never go out."

Later, her son told us that she spent most of the day pottering among the relics of the distant glory; fingering menu cards, dance programmes, ribbons, and her husband's decorations. Yet the son himself was hardly less nostalgic when he spoke about the reign of Francis Joseph. And when an hotel expert, exasperated by the old-fashioned comfort of the Hess hotels, offered to work out a plan for modernization, Herr Hess refused it indignantly.

The next evening we went out to Baden, where Austria had legalized gambling as an important source of state revenue. When we arrived the streets were filled with hurrying figures in dinner jackets—the croupiers were having their evening break. It was probably an exaggerated sensibility which made me think that these impeccably dressed gentlemen resembled black-plumed vultures feasting on the body of a not-quite-dead Austria. The casino itself was dull; the stakes were small, and when someone put five hundred *schillings* on red it caused a sensation.

Later in the night we returned to Vienna. We passed the *Dianabad*, which had a large indoor swimming pool and the first " artificial wave " to be installed in Europe. It also had an electric newspaper which flashed out news and advertisements. Unless there was some very unusual piece of news to be expected (the result of an international football match, or something similar), few people bothered to look at it. But now dense crowds were standing in front of the tall building, craning their necks, whispering, giggling. In a dense knot two men were fighting silently, swaying in a close embrace like lovers. I, too, looked up and saw that the electric sign was not moving as usual. Its message had become stationary—and when I read it I understood the cause of all the crowd's excitement. For the electric bulbs spelled:

" Dollfuss, Stahremberg and Fey . . ."

And the rest of it was a ribald and drastic insult against the Chancellor and these two Ministers. In a Ring café a Viennese journalist told me that someone had climbed to the top of the *Dianabad*, knocked out the operator of the electric newspaper, put the insulting rhyme on the ribbon of light, locked the iron door from the outside, and departed with the key. The firemen worked for three hours before they could break down the door. By that time, of course, many thousands of people had seen it.

IV

The last time I saw Vienna was in June, 1939, though I had landed at Aspern, the aerodrome, several times since the *Anschluss* on my way from London to Budapest. It was a dismal and shabby city, a capital degraded to the status of a country seat. Immense swastika flags covered the lovely front of the Opera House in honour of a visit by Dino Alfieri, the Italian Minister for Culture. But when I enquired at the box-office for tickets the grey-haired man in charge told me that I could buy any seat in the house except those in the official boxes. " They don't seem to like music any more, the Viennese," he said. No wonder—when the voice of a tenor or contralto was judged according to the singer's family tree. The Kaerntnerstrasse, Vienna's Bond Street, was hideous with neon-light swastikas. There was a long queue in front of the Meinl shops which used to sell the best coffee in Central Europe; only one in ten of those who waited patiently their turn was Viennese, the rest were German tourists who bought up everything they

could still get here, and had had to do without for so long in Berlin or Dresden.

Herr Hess greeted us in his hotel with a tired smile, but he still wore his beautiful white necktie. The large painting of Francis Joseph in the main dining-room had been replaced by a puffy-looking statue of Hitler. The room was almost deserted, and the few guests in it were talking in whispers.

"You must excuse me now," Herr Hess said, after we had chatted a few minutes. "I have a banquet of Armenians upstairs. Their committee has just been recognized by the Wilhelmstrasse, and they are celebrating . . ."

That night we listened to the Armenians celebrating. They were so noisy and made so many speeches that in the end we just stood in the window of our room which was across the well of the courtyard from the large banqueting hall and applauded whenever the Armenians did. They never noticed it.

Next morning, before I left, I asked Herr Hess about his mother. His bland, white face became a little strained.

"She died a few weeks after the *Anschluss*," he said. "Perhaps it was better that way . . ."

"Perhaps it was better that way"—for the whole of Austria. In spite of the half-hearted attempts to save her, she could not survive, an idiot's head on a pitifully wasted body. The laughter and wit of the cafés, theatres and newspapers was that of a frightened man whistling in the dark. The tiger swallowed the tail—and the dog. When Austria is resurrected—as she must be—she must have a sturdy body and a mind undimmed by the constant threat of death. Until then there is little hope for peace in Central Europe.

Five

> Look at Italy. Misfortune, suffering, protest, individual sacrifice, have reached their climax there. The cup is full. Oppression is everywhere, like the air we breathe, but rebellion also.
>
> MAZZINI

Mussolini's new autobiography is called *Mein Kämpfchen.*

A rem k overh d in T hul

THE LAND OF EXHIBITIONISTS

I

I HAVE NEVER been able to think of Italy as of a country. Politicians and historians who have published learned volumes trying to explain the phenomenon of Fascism, the rise of Mussolini and the part Italy is playing in the Second World War are sometimes apt to forget how young a state Italy is. Considerably younger than the United States of America and a baby-in-arms compared with England and France. "Young Italy" was founded by Mazzini little more than a century ago and the great Genoese spent most of his life fomenting revolutions against the Kingdom of Sardinia, the Austrian Empire, the Papal States and the Kingdom of Naples—all sharers of political power within the frontiers of present day Italy. Seventy years is too brief a period for the flowering of a national tradition, in spite of the artificial acceleration applied by the Duce with his Balilla, the slogan of "Believe, Obey, Fight!" and mosaic maps of the ancient Roman Empire. Much of Italian patriotism has been exhibitionism. What were those intensely Italian writers, Aretino and D'Annunzio but egregious exhibitionists? The centuries which separated these two men changed little in the spiritual attitude of the Italians. But are there any Italians? I doubt it. I have met Milanese and Romans, Florentines and Neapolitans, but to this very day I have never found anyone who represents a united Italy. Even the supreme Benito is no exception. The Northern Italians curse him for a Southerner while the Southern Italians regard him as "a tramp from the North." But they keep these reflections to themselves if the OVRA is about.

And the cities themselves, whose loveliness neither the "*Passo Romano*" nor castor oil nor even a German occupation can spoil, were never political units to me—they were only backgrounds of the men and women who, within the confines of a few hundred square miles between the Alps and the sea, have given Europe and mankind more beauty, wisdom and pleasure than any others. Padua to me is Galileo, and Venice is Titian; Assissi is the Saint of birds and flowers; Rome . . . no, my Rome is not the Pope's city, or Michelangelo's or Raffael's but

that of Aretino. As for Florence . . . what a happy embarrassment to choose between Petrarch and Dante, Savonarola and Boccaccio, Cellini and da Vinci!

When I went to Italy for the first time I went on a quest. I wanted to trace the career of Pietro Aretino, that fantastic rake and genius, the man who had become a millionaire by writing poetry and against whom the Church and the State started a campaign of slander and vituperation the moment he died. And though I never wrote the book I planned to write about the son of the cobbler of Arezzo, through him and in him I found the partial explanation of Italy's record in the first half of the twentieth century. Perhaps it might seem fantastic to go back all those centuries for a clue to a political system which had also become a philosophy and a religion—but Aretino supplied the answer to nearly all my questions.

II

About four hundred years ago Pietro Aretino had reached the zenith of his career. When Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor met him in Lombardy, the proud ruler of so many nations and races descended from his horse and greeted the poet on foot. And this was the same Emperor who had not bothered to rise when the Elector of Saxony took his leave! The Pope sent one messenger after another to tempt Aretino to Rome; and when at last he came, His Holiness received him with a kiss at the Porte del Popolo. Ariosto called him "the divine Aretino, scourge of princes." There were years when he earned a million *scudi*. The King of France presented him with a heavy golden chain (and I was happy to discover it in the Titian portrait displayed with careless ostentation over his heavy silken robes). His ex-secretary, Francesco Berni whom he sacked for general inefficiency was kicked out by every Italian publisher when he offered a satire on his former master. The publishers were mortally afraid of him—what a wish-dream for a struggling modern author! His books sold in incredible numbers whether they contained pornographic verse or the biography of the Holy Mary. "*Il Collegio non posse far tacer Pietro Aretino*"—he was able to declare of himself. He was rich, powerful and vigorous. He rose early in the morning and dashed off a hundred stanzas before breakfast. Princes and cardinals frequented his palace. The Sultan sent him an ambassador, an African princeling surprised him with the gift of a monkey trained in amusing tricks.

And what of the contemporary Italian poets? Tasso was starving in Ferrara; Sannazaro was living in poverty on the banks of the Loire, an exile from his beloved city; Strozzi was stabbed to death by Duke Alphonso d'Este for his too audacious verses addressed to Lucretia Borgia, the Duke's wife; Bembo was read only by the aristocracy and the fact that Michelangelo wrote poetry was a secret known only to the elect—or not even to them. The Humanists had lost the favour of the public. But Aretino was the acknowledged, the great, the unsurpassed master. In Venice he walked with Titian and Sansovino in the coolness of the evening under the arcades of St. Marco. Sometimes he became bored with the city of lagoons and joined his friend, Giovanni delle Bande Nere, the condottiere grandson of the Medicis. With him he could relax from the somewhat strenuous pose of the great author and man-of-the-world: he could be vulgar and natural, eat, laugh and drink with equal heartiness; discuss princes, courtesans, saints and generals in the saddle. (Just as Mussolini who seeks escape from state cares in the vulgarity of speed and loud music.) Aretino was a condottiere of literature, a past master and archstragetist in blackmail. After such bouts he returned to Venice where he was free, happy and safe and where, in his own lifetime, he enjoyed the assurance of immortality.

For all his arrogance and success posterity revenged itself fully. A few years after his death even to mention his name was forbidden. This favourite of Popes was actually put on the Index! Not a single original copy of his most famous works was preserved. If one of his books was republished in Paris or Holland, his name was missing from the title-page or turned into an anagram. (I saw in Venice's San Marco Library a book, *Septem psalmi penitentiali*, published in 1558 at Vinegia under the name of *Partenio Etiro*, a transparent anagram of Pietro Aretino.) His memory was to be eradicated—yet people were still reading him. Brantôme, that most loquacious of chroniclers, tells how a Paris nobleman, being in love with a young lady, had thought his suit quite hopeless—until he discovered that his beloved was keeping a copy of Aretino's *Figuræ* in her secret drawer . . . which certainly proved that she was not unattainable. But gradually it became a dangerous habit to keep Aretino in any secret drawer as the Church persecuted him with increasing fervour. In 1660 his letters were published once more. But after that his literary heritage was split into

two parts: that of the writer who was forgotten and that of the author of the pornographic *Conversations* who was still read. Not even the roccocco revived him; he was too barbaric, too spicy. In the nineteenth century only his name remained, his works were inaccessible. But even his name was enough to cause a storm of indignation. "He surpasses in shamelessness almost anything in ancient or modern literature," a German encyclopædia thundered. In his *Renaissance*, Count Gobineau, one of the spiritual ancestors of the Nazi racial theories, presents him as a clumsy blackmailer. "*Alas*, the finest letters of the Rinascimento were written by Aretino," says the excellent Jakob Burckhardt, steeped in centuries-old prejudice. Santi, an Italian essayist, declared that Aretino was the son of a courtesan; that he tried to blackmail Michelangelo; that when at a banquet in 1557 someone related to him the scandalous and erotic adventures of his youngest sister, he died of laughter. The only authentic fact that emerges from this farrago is that Aretino did indeed try to blackmail Michelangelo—not for money but for a picture. He was the son of a cobbler of Arezzo, a fact he often mentioned in his letters; if his mother *had* been a courtesan, Aretino would have gloried in it. He was certainly a rascal and an exhibitionist, but he was also a symbol of Italian brilliance. And if he was a "fairweather hero" there are many of his compatriots who deserve the same title. He was shallow, again like so many Italian geniuses; yet he was as deep as the tideless water of the Mediterranean. He was a bad poet but an amazingly advanced dramatist and his letters contain all that was best and finest in the Italian Renaissance.

A few years before Mussolini embarked on his empire-building in Abyssinia, I spoke of Aretino to an eminent Italian critic. He shook his head in noble anger.

"We in Fascist Italy," he said, "despise Aretino—not because he was pornographic but because he was sterile. He never found a word of praise for child-bearing and the mission of an expanding nation. To him sex was merely pleasurable indulgence—not a means to an end but an end in itself. . . ."

We were sitting at a café table in Milan's covered Corso. The eminent critic's eye strayed towards a pretty fair-haired girl—a German or American visitor who was sitting at the next table. The gleam in his eye was not at all missionary. I am sure that Aretino would have approved this gleam—as a means to an end.

III

Gabriele D'Annunzio—or Gaetano Rapagnetta—was a modern Aretino. But while Aretino laughed at everything and everybody, himself included, and saw politics as a ridiculous game, a rich field of blackmail and blind man's bluff—D'Annunzio was the serious type of *poseur* who plunged into politics with the same zest as he pursued his writing and his love affairs.

When he appeared first in the political arena, it caused such a scandal that he decided not to meddle again with home politics but to limit himself to foreign affairs. It was he who with his " I Canti della Gesta d'Oltremare " whipped up popular enthusiasm for the annexation of Tripolitania; to some extent, it was he who brought Italy into the first world war on the side of the Allies (Richard Voss, the German writer, denounced him in a vitriolic novel as a turncoat and a literary prostitute); and his Fiume adventure was the crowning effort of a violent life.

Nor were his other adventures less complicated or scandalous. His various moral escapades were only prologues to the " great love-affair " which he staged like a skilful producer and which caused a world sensation. Unhappy Eleonora Duse lost both her hard-won fortune and her life through her stormy affair with D'Annunzio. But scandals which would have ruined ordinary mortals, seemed to leave the poet unscathed. Nevertheless in 1928, Mussolini assured Bojer, the Norwegian author, that D'Annunzio's rôle in the literary life of Italy had ended. " Present-day Italy," he declared, " has no need of such men."

This declaration naturally received some publicity. Knowing on which side his bread was buttered, D'Annunzio did everything he could to win the public opinion of Fascist Italy. This explains perhaps the gesture of his last will and testament by which he left his whole fortune, his manuscripts, books, estates and his villa to the nation. When someone asked him after he had announced this intention, what would happen to his sons, he shrugged his shoulders : " Let them work," he replied, " and they will live."

Yes, he was an exhibitionist—but on a noble scale. He was perhaps the greatest *poseur* of his age. After the Fiume adventure he retired to his mysterious villa which was constantly guarded by well-armed detectives, though against what danger no one knew. There was a little stream in his garden, with a footbridge which he christened the Bridge of Desires. If he—

rarely—received a visitor, he took him to the bridge, asked him for a coin, and dropped it ceremoniously into the water, assuring the guest that whatever his wish, it would be fulfilled. A little farther there was a waterfall, and below it a pool stocked with some carp. When I visited the miraculous garden at Gardone —D'Annunzio was absent—the old servant who took me around, told me with a wink:

"This is where the Master preaches to the fish . . ."

Here in this villa he wrote for many years his books, here he prepared the eighty volumes of his *Opera Omnia* for the press, a labour of many years, for he often re-wrote whole pages in galley form. He certainly had the deepest respect for his own literary output. Once he showed to a trusted friend the proofs of his famous *Forse che si, forse che no* (Perhaps yes, perhaps no . . .), and the trusted friend was malicious enough to publish something he saw on the bottom of the last page. This carried the following note in the poet's handwriting: "*Imprimatur. Gabriele D'Annunzio. In sincere admiration of myself. Midnight, 18th September*, 1927."

"Perhaps yes, perhaps no" was the world's epitaph on D'Annunzio. It could never be determined with any certainty whether he was a great writer or not. An American publisher offered him a large sum for his autobiography, but he refused the offer with a royal gesture, declaring that the story of his life was amply told in the eighty volumes of his collected works. That may indeed be true. If we think of *Il Fuoco*, in which he described his love-affair with Eleanora Duse in such detail that it became a world-wide scandal, we must grant the poet's claim to have put at least some of his life into his books. He composed a manuscript of thirty-odd pages to defend himself against the attacks which *Il Fuoco* provoked, but this was never printed. About eight years ago, however, the manuscript was sold by auction. Its title was *The Purity of Il Fuoco*, and it was designed to prove that the attacks against it were groundless. But when the world heard of the contents of this document, all its sympathy turned to the memory of unhappy, humiliated Duse.

Of course, the frankness of *Il Fuoco* made it a best-seller. But a *succès de scandale* is seldom welcome to the serious artist. The best Italians were disgusted by D'Annunzio's brutal disclosures of the love life of their greatest actress. As a reprisal some Italian journalists unmasked the private life of D'Annunzio, exposing his unsavoury business deals, his gambling debts, his

relations with rich but elderly ladies. D'Annunzio was driven into a long Paris exile.

But as the years passed and the first world war came, he was forgiven his sins. Some of his posturings now seemed even sincere, although he was still very much the *poseur* when he incited his countrymen to start a "holy war" against the Central Powers. In any event, his past was forgotten and he became an "official poet." But he still indulged in his extravagant gestures. When one of his plays was being presented in Milan, the leading lady, Emma Grammatica, organized a charity bazaar, at which the poet allowed one of his teeth to be sold by auction! It reposed in a golden casket, and the city of Milan bought it for three thousand lire.

When Starace, the ex-General Secretary of the Fascist Party, published a book on the Abyssinian campaign, D'Annunzio wrote him a congratulatory letter. He also presented the Fascist dignitary with a valuable coin and the description of his "latest invention." Apparently he had discovered an elixir which, when mixed with warm water, would not merely kill a man instantly but completely dissolve his body. Experiments had proved its deadly efficacy on animals. When he felt the hour of his death approaching he said he would have a bath prepared for him with this chemical. So would he escape the final agony and, departing, leave not a trace. But when the hour of death came D'Annunzio had forgotten his discovery.

A few months before his death he was once more in the news. His estate at Gardone was unique; after the war he bought an old cruiser and had it dismantled and set up in his garden. There was a naval gun on its foredeck. When he wished to pay special honour to a guest, he would receive him in naval uniform and then fire a salute from the old gun. D'Annunzio's neighbour was a German industrial magnate who had not only built a villa within sight of his own, but had, with singularly bad taste, painted it pink. D'Annunzio despatched an ultimatum, demanding that within twenty-four hours it should be repainted orange. The German did not answer. D'Annunzio trained his gun on the villa. The owner promptly informed the police that if the slightest damage were done to his property he would immediately lodge a complaint at the Wilhelmstrasse. The police prefect who was a shrewd man, decreed that the house should be repainted—but at the cost of the Italian Exchequer.

Now D'Annunzio has been dead for more than three years and already his memory is fading. It seems to me that he and Aretino, with their incessant posing, shot with occasional flashes of brilliance, offer in their characters a better explanation of Italy than any exposition of Fascist philosophy.

IV

No, I have never been able to think of Italy as a country. Perhaps unreasonably, I could not take seriously her diminutive King and his buxom Montenegrine wife; and Mussolini, in spite of his chin and his dynamic speeches seemed but a successful mountebank. Yet the Duce had certainly " got away with it " and we all know the legend of " trains on time " and beggars banned which has been broadcast so diligently by English and American travellers. Moreover, he put an end to the Sicilian Maffia, even if it was but to incorporate its methods in his OVRA. But a thousand Mussolinis could not transform the Italians into a nation of grim, determined conquerors. Why should they try to conquer the world when they already possessed everything they needed for a decent life in their own country? It is true, they could build magnificent roads—but why build roads that led nowhere? And that is what the roads in Africa usually did.

Whenever I went to Italy I tried in vain to whip up some interest in her politics. Her artistic and intellectual past was too glorious to permit of such an irrelevance; her cities too perfect. Indeed the Italians themselves—except a very small minority—shared my own inability to take their politics seriously. They shouted obediently whenever Il Duce appeared, but only because it was less trouble to shout than to explain one's silence. One thing might have made the Italians politically effective—their hatred of the Germans. Unfortunately even this widespread emotion, shared by everybody, with the possible exception of Count Ciano and Edda Mussolini, did not make them effective enough. Hence their blundering into a war which could harm them in a million ways and profit them in none.

No, when I think of the Italy that I have known and loved, I try to forget her Duce and her politics, the mass meetings and slogans and meditate on the places wherein her spirit dwells—her towns and mountains, lagoons and plains, palaces and streets, churches and piazzas.

Many a time have I argued with my friends on the contending merits of the Italian cities and it is difficult indeed to decide which are the loveliest, the most memorable. For me there are four: Verona, Florence, Venice and Milan. I have been told that this is a stupid and haphazard selection—and that in any case, Milan is ugly and vulgar. But some people are deaf to Debussy and others even dislike Mozart—taste and preference defy analysis. I agree that Rome has a cold majesty of her own, despite the monstrosity of the Victor Emmanuel monument; that Naples is a bit of the Levant transplanted into Italian soil; that Capri, Padua, Bordighera, Cremona, Pisa all have their points. Yet I persist in my preference—obstinate if you will—for those four cities. Not that I love them for their more self-evident beauties—rather is my affection rooted in the special memories and associations which bind me to them. My epitaph on Italy, as she lived, suffered, laughed and sang between the two world wars, would be incomplete if I did not try to conjure up the things I love most about these four cities.

V

The Piazza Erbe is the biggest square of Verona. If I close my eyes, I can see it, with almost painful clarity, in the dazzling sunshine. There is a marble column in the background, topped by the Lion of Venice. On either hand those ancient palaces, the Casa Mazzanti and the Casa dei Mercanti, in the centre the well which has yielded water for a thousand years. For in Italy there are wells that never run dry and provide cooling water and relief to men even in times when the gods are thirsting for blood.

In Roman times this square was the Forum of Verona. To-day it is the market place for fruit and vegetables. The marble pavement is piled with tomatoes, spinach, peaches, the pears and grapes of South Tyrol. By the fountain and in the doorways of the Renaissance palaces garlic and radishes are displayed.

But in my memory this square, surrounded severely and unalterably by the noble stones, is crowded with life, bubbling and sizzling with it. Beneath the canvas of the stalls the merchandize is desiccating in the heat. An old, one-eyed man has placed six blackened figs on a plank and is waiting indifferently for the customer who will buy up his stock for a few coppers. This trust and modesty, this blind faith in fate, somehow

makes me feel hopeful about the future of Italy. Such faith, I tell myself, must survive almost anything. Even a German occupation.

The Piazza Erbe is one of the oldest market places in the world. Everything here is governed by tradition : the particular angle at which the cauliflower or strings of garlic are displayed, the voices trying to arrest the customer before he passes out of hearing. They are poor, these Italians, and they spend the whole day earning a few coppers. In the neighbouring street a trolleybus is clanging, but in the Piazza Erbe very little has changed since the Roman times. Patrician matrons walked in the same way these marble flags, among the stalls, under the merciless sun ; figs and olives were sold in the same manner and same quantities. There is something eternal in the life of this sun-baked square : a thousand-year-old vegetable market with its modest yet quick-witted stall-keepers. These Veronese market-women, gardeners and small farmers, are all aristocrats in their simple way. A fat woman whom I can still see in my mind's eye, surrounded by eight strings of onions, her hands folded on her ample middle, might be a Marchesa in the drawing-room on her " at home " day.

I stand in the midst of this hot and odorous scene and I am filled suddenly with the happiness and tranquillity which permeates the square and its people. Here, I say, is the essential Italy as truly representative as all the museums of Venice and Rome, the pictures of the Uffizi or the library of the Vatican. Italian culture—so completely unaffected by Mussolini and his blackshirts—is not only Titian, but also that wise indifference with which the one-eyed old man spends the day sitting behind the six blackened figs. This culture survived not merely in the furniture of the Venetian Palazzo Rezzonico, but in the words, smiles, gestures which accompanied the purchase of a few heads of cabbage on the Piazza Erbe. The authentic evidence of culture is never the surplus, the nectar overflowing from the cup, the gift of genius—but is to be found in the qualities of the average man and woman and the mental attitude in which these qualities are expressed. The Piazza Erbe with its marble palaces and nondescript vegetable stalls, its bronzed men, and smiling, dignified women, is a masterpiece—like Michelangelo's *David* or da Vinci's *Last Supper*. This is immortal Italy, I assure myself, and begin to bargain with the one-eyed old man over the six blackened figs.

I had heard Mascagni conducting in the open-air theatre of Verona; I had made the pilgrimage to the graves of Romeo and Juliet (spurious though they may be)—but the Piazza Erbe sustains my belief in the Italy of isolated towns and districts so superbly indifferent to Mussolini's mock empire.

VI

Five years had passed between my first and second visit to Florence, and when I arrived for the second time I felt like an unexpected guest. No one met me at the station, nor could I get a room in my old hotel. I took a cab and drove from one crowded *albergo* to another. I discovered that Florence did not like unexpected guests. This was a serious, grown-up city which would only suffer people who observed regulations and rules. Finally I was given a tiny garret in a private house on the bank of the Arno. I felt that Florence wanted to punish me because I had not been polite enough to announce my coming.

Everything was severe and mature in this enclosed city, and one had to follow the rules laid down by Dante and the Medicis; no one could trespass unpunished against local customs. It was dusk when I came down from my garret into the street. In Florence the early evening is always like a pageant—something organized for the benefit of visitors, eternity, the "natives"—and world history. Whenever I watched the broken beams of the sun gleam on the forehead of the Florentine houses I remembered that those colours—that soft yellow, those blue shadows—had taught Domenico Veneziano, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci how to see dusk and light. The same colours had taught all who experienced here for the first time eternity in time and were able to express it—Fra Giovanni Angelico as much as Gozzoli or Uccello. These men had all walked the Florentine streets in the evening when the first haze began to cover the gentle slopes of the Appenines. The cobbler and the basket-maker sat on the threshold of their houses and talked softly about life, children, politics and money. This was the moment when silence came suddenly to Florence. In the tiny workshop fixed like a swallow's nest to the Ponte Vecchia, the silversmith put down his fine chisel, shaped precisely as in the days of Cellini. Time is treasured in Florence like some rare perfume in an alabaster vase. Centuries seem to linger in every moment and moments endure for centuries.

This is a haughty city, I thought, as I set forth along the broad street towards my memories. The saddler and stone-mason, the goldsmith and the priest, the painters, writers and merchants, were all aristocrats in *incognito*. Even the waiters were haughty; not insolent, but proud . . . a vital difference. The very flower-sellers behaved as if they were related to Lorenzo the Magnificent; when the baker built a house, he dreamt of the Palazzo Pitti, the loveliest ever built by a commoner. The palaces along the Arno, near the Cascine and the parallel streets, were still inhabited by *marchesas*. They had red-coated porters, ancient Hispano Suiza cars, Renaissance furniture and in their drawers Russian and South American stocks and shares. They were at home to callers between five and seven in the afternoon. They did not receive me. Yet when afternoon came I found I could not keep away from these palaces in which the last members of Tuscan nobility were carefully preserved. Their Swiss porters wore purple and gold uniforms and white side whiskers. They showed the same imperturbability whether the guest whom they assisted from his car was a French archæologist or the Duke of Norfolk.

On that distant evening, five years after my first visit, I walked towards the other bank of the Arno. It was in the narrow street leading to the church of St. Martin that my memories assailed me like a flock of monstrous birds. Yes, there was the house, just opposite the church. That row of windows belonged to the "rooms for hire." The landlady was a countess and extremely gracious. She was always shrouded in a shawl of Venetian lace; I saw her wearing it at seven in the morning when she was passing from the bathroom to her own suite. Her rooms were rented to poor people, Italians and foreigners; yet her mere presence created an "aristocratic atmosphere" in the whole house. In the winter evenings, when we assembled in the drawing-room for music, there were small iron baskets filled with glowing embers under the chairs. The only warm spot in Florence was the Uffizi. In the afternoons I usually sat in the room behind Giaiosa's pastry-shop. I remember that I was irritated by the tittle-tattle of the English spinsters around me, while feeling pleased by my perverse superiority. I was only twenty-one and had anyone asked me my business in Florence I could not have told him. I had earned a little money during the summer in England and Spain; now I planned to write my "masterpiece," but I tore up page after page as

I felt as superior towards my literary efforts as towards the "tourists" in Florence. Yes . . . this was the house and that was the window behind which the young English painter had shot himself. Someone had screamed when the shot rang out, but afterwards we were all silent. The servants walked barefoot on the marble floor. The countess and the other Italians in the house accepted death with Latin fatalism, while we foreigners were baffled but did not show it.

And here was the bridge of the Holy Trinity, which everybody crossed as solemnly as if they were on their way to attend a requiem; for me the loveliest bridge in the world—perhaps because I was so young when I crossed it for the first time. Its arch is as mature, as self-assured and symmetrical, as a Bach fugue. It is something unrepeatable, unique, as if it lifted Man above time, above the moments of everyday experiences. There are moments when the stonemasons and engineers look towards heaven while they work. At such moments are created bridges like the Ponte Trinita; or the houses which inspire us, centuries later, with the thought: "Yes, man, too, can be immortal." Afterwards, when we sit down to supper we may be ashamed of such thoughts.

I crossed the bridge and saw the *other* Florence. Behind me was the burghers' city, the republic, the political unit. In front, the artistic, heroic, all-conquering Florence. The tower of the Signoria rises above the rooftops, proclaiming that stones and human beings achieve eternity when the churches, offices, shops and homes are filled with the idea of freedom; when the artist, the mysterious spokesman for the inarticulate burgher, is able to express this idea of freedom in books, pictures and statues. Florence has become permeated by this idea and by the calm consciousness of disciplined beauty. It seems strange that Savonarola should have lived in this city. Yet he did and I walked the same stones which his unshod feet had touched when on his way to the stake. You cannot escape his memory in Florence.

Only in Florence? Behind beauty and joy—the somewhat guilty beauty and joy that are tinged with the fear of death—is there not everywhere in the world a bit of Savonarola? I thought of his eyes, shining in the darkness of his cell in the San Marco, staring at the swallows, at the clouds, and longing so violently for the something he called truth that he could will the destruction of beauty, which he did not dare to accept

as the common human heritage; longing so greedily for life that he preferred death. No man was more the servant of his passions, I thought that night, five years to a day since my first visit to Florence. I went to the Albergo San Ruffilo to meet some English friends for dinner. In the noise and tobacco haze I still thought of Savonarola and his passionate tenacity; but without anger or resentment, almost hesitatingly. Behind the beauty and ripe charm, behind the colours and symmetry which make up Florence—behind all mundane joy and peace—did he not represent the other, the eternal idea? He was the embodiment of wild and cruel denial, this reckless monk who forced art and politics, the dual shapers of our world, into a heroic passion which was no longer human and mundane . . . Perhaps this was our fate on earth: to create beauty, to express human ideas—while all the time aware of the warning, burning eyes of Savonarola. How much passion had raged here, among these stones, I wondered while I peeled a pear. Here Michelangelo had lived, peaceless until the very end. Michelangelo and Savonarola! The first had created in passion these masterpieces which the second, moved by the same passion, wanted to destroy. This duality is the essence of Man. And Florence is the city where one can comprehend it.

What could the former anarchist and bricklayer, the "fair-weather hero" of the Palazzo Venezia do to destroy this understanding?

VII

The first time in Venice I "did" obediently the programme of the tourist-in-a-hurry. Canale Grande, San Marco, Merceria, S. Bartolommeo, Rialto and then the Lido. The next time I spent days in the Museo Civico Correr, the Naval Museum near the Arsenal, the Regia Accademia di Belle Arti, the Ca d'Oro, the Doge Palace, the Scuola San Rocco, the Libreria Sansoviana, the Basilica San Marco and all the other churches from the Frari to the della Salute, from the Redentore on the Giudecca to the Scalzi. I even found time for Murano, Burano and Torcello. And though I was exhausted by the end of the second day I still plodded on, for I felt that I could not cheat myself out of a single picture, tomb or palace.

The third visit was that of the gourmet trying to taste only the unusual, to titillate a palate jaded by too many impressions and revelations. I spent a few lazy days trying to trace Venetian

history, through the nomenclature of her squares, lagoons, quays and bridges. I wandered from the Riva dei Schiavoni (Quay of Slavs, not *Slaves* as the French guide-books maintained, for this was the dock for the ships from the Dalmatian, Slavonic harbours) to the Ponte della Paglia (Straw Bridge), where the barges unloaded their straw for the dungeons of the Doge Palace, from the Ponte dei Pugni (Bridge of Slaps), on which the youth of Eastern and Western Venice so often came to blows, to the Calle Malpaga, the Street of Bad Debtors, so named because a family of notorious defaulters once lived there. From bridge to bridge I followed the fascinating crazy pavement of Venetian lore. It was a bit confusing that the Gritti family had given its name to Ponte, Ramo, Sottoportico, Fondamenta and Calle just as there are squares, streets, crescents, avenues of the same name in London or that the numbering of houses had been done according to districts and not streets, and someone might live at Number 5874, Calle delle Carozze.

But when I came to Venice for the fourth time, I avoided the glories of Titian and Veronese, the Campanile and the Merceria, even the soft sands of the Lido. I set up my headquarters in the Florian, the Venetian café on the San Marco, which has been serving tired visitors for over two centuries. The life of the most famous square in Italy opened like a picture book, and one had only to sit and watch to discover the secret of Venice. The beauty of the city might be concentrated in the palaces and picture galleries, in the lagoons and the hidden little squares—but here in the Florian one found her living soul, multi-coloured and exciting.

Who can describe the Florian? Balzac called it "a combination of club, reading-room, theatre vestibule, stock exchange and law-court"—but these were mere words. Taine, in 1864, said that the Florian was "the navel of Venice, the stage box from which the greatest spectacle of the world could be watched in luxurious ease."

In the eighteenth century it was in front of the Florian that Venice displayed her soul. Foreigners in every known fashion of East and West passed in front of the small tables, mixing with officers in heavy gold braid, purple-gowned patricians, black-coated burghers, stevedores, and fish-wives in shawls. The democracy of San Marco brought rich and poor into the closest proximity. Outside the Florian "improvisators" of poetry recited their rhymes, quack doctors proclaimed the

miraculous virtues of their remedies. Magicians displayed their tricks ; itinerant comedians acted brief, knock-about plays on a rough and ready stage. At the foot of the Campanile blackleg lawyers sold advice for a few *soldi*, side by side with the scribes who specialized in love letters. During the summer garish umbrellas and canvas awnings protected the guests from the broiling sun. Here Jean Jacques Rousseau dreamed of the return to nature and Casanova plotted some new devilry.

Without the San Marco and the Florian the great Renaissance of the Italian theatre might never have been achieved, supplanting the artless simplicity of the commedia dell'arte. But from beneath the Florian's arches a man was watching with shrewd eyes the bustling, colourful, full-blooded life of his age. His name was Goldoni. All the types that passed him as in a parade, from fisherman to beribboned dandy, he could transplant almost bodily from reality to the stage. He treated them with the same cool curiosity with which an entomologist pins a bug or a butterfly into his collection. In the secluded world of Rome he could never have savoured life at such close quarters, and his talent might have remained undeveloped. Never has a statue been placed more happily than Goldoni's in front of the Rialto. There he stands, supporting himself with his cane, in the centre of the ever-crowded, noisy square, as if surveying and appraising, as in life, the scene.

The Florian was the centre of Venice's first real fight against the Germans. They were called Austrians in those days, but their qualities differed little from Hitler's aberrations. Manin, one of the leaders of Italian revolution in 1848, recruited most of his followers in and around the ancient café. When he was put in prison, it was from the Florian that the black-garbed Venetians walked in procession to do him reverence outside the prison walls. When he was set at liberty, it was to the Florian that his followers carried him on their shoulders. And when, in 1866, the new German menace triumphed over the old one and Prussia's star began to blot out Austria's, the Florian was the centre of jubilation. But the Austrians were slow in taking themselves off. On July 8th, 1866, some soldiers of the Habsburg General Altmann appeared in San Marco and nailed a strange proclamation on the door of the Florian. The news had arrived that Venice was to return to Italy. The Venetians besieged the drapers' shops to buy material for Italian flags. Every window was decorated with them. Altmann, though he

was due to evacuate the city within a few weeks, decided that the Italians must be kept under military discipline to the very last moment. He could not acknowledge the existence of the Italian flag. He therefore issued a proclamation:

> "Rumours have caused an increase in the purchase of *coloured materials* by the general public. Such purchases have no significance in themselves; but with the materials certain individuals have made up a certain kind of insignia which is liable to provoke demonstrations. I warn everybody that the instigators of such demonstrations will be arrested and tried by military tribunals."

Before there could be any military tribunals, however, Victor Emanuel II entered Venice and thereafter the Venetians could fly as many Italian flags as they pleased.

At one time the Florian was the headquarters of the famous Venetian literary society of the *Granelleschi*, that endeavoured to preserve the purity of the Italian language. This aim, however, was too highbrow for the gay-hearted Venetian *literati* who, to enliven the proceedings, enacted that their president must always be the most stupid and conceited writer among them. After some cogitation they elected a second-rate poet named Giuseppe Sacchelari, who was so stupid and conceited that he regarded the appointment as an honour. Among his presidential privileges at the Florian was the right to consume hot coffee in the summer and eat ice-cream in the winter.

In the Florian I first heard—in the summer of 1939—of the silent, systematic penetration by the Germans. The man who told me about it was reader and literary adviser of the largest Italian publishing house, who had fought at Caporetto and Vittorio Veneto in the first World War. Under the surface there was constant strife, I was told—and the Germans were winning. Mussolini had sold Italy to the devil, and, strongly as decent patriots might resent the transaction, it seemed there was little that could be done about it. "In every Ministry, in every factory," he said, "there are German observers. We have one in our firm. He vetoes the publication not only of pro-English books, but the most harmless fiction. He is especially anxious to prevent us from publishing American books and we have lost heavily during the past six months by being deprived of American best sellers. On the other hand, we are flooded with German authors whom nobody wants to buy."

" Can't you do anything about it? " I asked.

" Apparently not. We went to Dino Alfieri, the Propaganda Minister, and to Bottai, the Minister of Education. They were both very sympathetic. Bottai even took the matter to the Duce. After that we were severely reprimanded. Co-operation within the Axis, you see, must be complete."

He smiled.

" Sometimes, you know, it gives me a certain ironic pleasure to reflect that two of our national heroes have fought against the Austrians, whom we Italians identified with the Germans. You know all about the story of Balilla? "

" Only that he has given his name to the Fascist youth organization. Aren't there four million boys in it? "

" Yes. And they are all called after a Genoese street urchin! His real name was Giovanni Battista Perasso, but everybody knew him as ' Balilla,' which is a variant of Battista in the Genoese dialect. In 1746 Genoa had been heavily fined by the Austrians, who tried to remove from the city everything of value, including the famous mortar which the people had named Santa Caterina. They lugged the mortar as far as the Piazza Pammatone, but there it got stuck in the mud. As the mules could not pull it out some Italians were whipped to the ropes. Suddenly an Austrian bombardier, in the act of lifting his whip against an old man, found himself hit by a stone. A boy had thrown it at him. That was how the revolution began. For five days the Genoese fought the Austrians, and by the sixth there were no longer any Austrians in the city. The memory of Balilla was greatly respected long before Mussolini turned him into a symbol for Italian youth."

" And who was the other hero? " I asked.

" Cesare Battisti, editor of *La Vita Trentina*, whom the Austrians shot as a traitor. He was Mussolini's editor, too, before the World War. He died because he avowed that the Trentino was rightly Italian soil. Mussolini lived to make it Italian—though God knows he has not succeeded. Untold misery has resulted from the forced exchange of populations arranged by the Duce and Hitler."

" Isn't it rather risky for you to be talking so frankly? " I asked.

" Hate must speak freely, otherwise it would choke us," he said. But he lowered his voice. " And I can assure you that never have we Italians hated more fervently than we now hate the Germans."

Within a year of this conversation Italy entered the war on Germany's side.

VIII

Everywhere during our drive across Italy from Postumia to Bordighera there were signs of this hidden hate. We were frowned upon if we spoke German ; and when we spoke English the people in hotels and restaurants were childishly eager to assure us that Italy would never, never go to war against Britain. Hadn't Garibaldi (or was it Cavour ?) cursed the Italian statesman who should lead his people into such a conflict ? Was not Rome planning a world exhibition in 1942, proof sufficient of peaceful intentions ? Here and there in cafés and inns we ran into German officers or civilians, sitting strangely isolated and stared at curiously by the " natives." Because of these interlopers prices were put up everywhere. Indeed, the Italians seemed to derive a certain perverse pleasure from fleecing their partners in the Axis. From Padua to Trieste, from Rome to Milan, I found the same undercurrent of resentment and, in places, active opposition. True, it was inarticulate and people refused to speculate on the outcome of it all.

But when we came to Milan a series of talks that I had with various people threw a different light on the situation. They explained the intellectual sterility of Italy between the two wars and also the signs of an incipient revolt against the regimentation of Fascism.

One night we were sitting on the roof garden of the Olympia, one of the loveliest of European restaurants. Its " backdrop " is the Cathedral of Milan, that incredible index-finger pointing to the sky. On gala nights strong spotlights were turned on the Duomo to make it glitter in all its glory, emphasizing the contrast between the crowded roof garden and the aloofness of eternal stone. The orchestra was playing American dance tunes with that operatic flavour which the Italian musician invariably infuses into any melody, however banal, and I was talking to Signora F., wife of an Italian publisher, who also ran—as a sideline—a private telephone company. She was fat, but *soignée* ; in her youth she must have been very beautiful. Our conversation had about it a taste of *Alice in Wonderland*, as she persisted in speaking French and I stuck to Italian—but her small, white, fat hands alone were more expressive than all my linguistic efforts.

"The trouble with our writers," she was saying, "is inner censorship."

"Inner censorship?" I repeated, uncertain of her meaning.

"Yes," she nodded. "They begin it before they even set a word on paper. Our political leaders are terribly sensitive. And we Italians were always good at innuendo. So the most innocent references to a place, a name or a colour may get the author into trouble. For example, in Italian novels, successful men must never be bald. Is not our most successful man quite a bald-head? Yet if it was only *his* sensitivity we had to respect, our problems would be easy. But there is his son-in-law. There are his friends and associates. They all have their physical and mental peculiarities and are quick to suspect that they are being made fun of. It is true we don't send our offending writers to concentration camps—we merely refuse them access to their public. And for many writers this is a worse punishment than internment at Buchenwald or Dachau. That is why almost every Italian writer has his inner censorship. You can judge for yourself how difficult it is to create literary work of merit under such circumstances. . . ."

"But haven't they tried to revolt?" I asked.

"There is constant revolt, but until now it has been futile. Of late, with the Germans occupying key positions in our country and German influence growing from day to day, the writer's task has become even more difficult. For while previously he had only to avoid hurting the feelings of the Duce and his entourage, now he must be just as careful about what he says of Herr Hitler and the whole Berlin gang."

I wanted to ask more questions, but her husband tapped her on her arm. "Careful, *cara mia*," he said. "You know that the OVRA prefers the Olympia to any other place in the town."

She shrugged her ample shoulders.

"They would never dare to touch me," she said. "After all, you publish books of our party officials."

Next day I met a young lawyer. Our rendezvous was at the famous Assissi fountain where St. Francis feeds his "little brothers," the birds. As I waited for my friend I amused myself by watching the real birds that came to drink at the fountain. One of them pecked at the bronze grains of corn reposing in the Saint's palm and flew away disappointed.

The young lawyer took me to the pride of Milanese youth, the "club," with its swimming-pool, tennis courts and a bar at

which Scotch whisky seemed to be the favourite drink. Outside on the terrace several people were drinking tea, not because they enjoyed it, but because it was according to the anglophile traditions of the club. After we had ordered *espressos* I asked my friend what he thought of all this talk about German domination of Italy.

" It won't be long," he said confidently. " One day the Nazis will go too far. We Italians dislike fighting for an abstract idea or without tangible reasons. But we will fight like hell to get rid of the Nazis. After all, the English and the French have no territorial designs on Italy, but the Germans have. They have always been filled with the ' Drang nach dem Süden.' Mark my words, if they force Italy into war you will find us on Britain's side in the end."

I wonder what has happened to this young lawyer who held such dangerous views ? Was he among those who were sent to the Lipari Islands, the Italian version of the French penal colonies ? Did he march with his regiment towards the Greek plains, only to be massacred in some mountain pass by Evzones ? I doubt if I shall ever know.

But it was in the Galleria, the famous covered promenade of Milan, that I heard the most pungent summary of Italo-German relations. In this immense building of steel, concrete and glass the life of Milan pulses with a concentrated vivacity. Few people who sit here at one of the thousands of small tables are aware that Mengoni, the architect of this modern miracle, fell to his death from the scaffolding just one day before it was opened. Nor do they know that the capital necessary for this huge block of covered streets and square was provided by British financiers.

The man who spoke was the same critic who had abused Aretino so heartily. In a sudden spasm of confidence he leant close to me and whispered :

" Of course, when we had already built Rome the Germans were still living in trees and chattering like monkeys. And back to the trees they will go."

Six

. . . Farther off lie the yellow and grey fields of the dry lands, without trees or water . . .

ARTURO BAREA—*The Forge*

The Doubter: What is the value of all this? I have come from Nothing only to sink back once more into Nothing.
The Believer: I do not know whence you come and where you go. But do you never feel thirst?
The Doubter: Of course I do.
The Believer: Well, then, you must drink. It is no use to fight against reverie and longing whenever they overwhelm us. But my ideas, my mind, you cry. What use is all that? The thirst remains.

MAURICE BARRÈS

THE THIRST REMAINS

I

WHEN DID Spain die—the Spain I knew and tried to understand? Was it at Guernica when the Fascist planes swooped low to kill and maim? Was it when General Franco marched into a sullen Madrid? I do not know. I have not been to Spain since the Civil War. The months I had spent wandering over the arid plains and the Basque country seem to belong to another century . . . perhaps another planet.

In a small box crammed with letters I keep a few thin sheets of paper covered with nervous, hurried writing. It is a letter from Giorgio, my Italian friend with whom, although we have never met, I have corresponded for several years. We had become pen-friends through a young American whose passion was exchanging letters with kindred souls all over the world. It took but a few months to discover everything about Giorgio. He was the son of one of the most distinguished of Rome's physicians, and he himself had studied medicine. He spent a year or so in England, where he became a member of the Oxford

Group. Next he appeared in Spain as a doctor on the Loyalist side. He was M.O. of a battery near Tardiente. Later he was wounded. The last I heard of him was when he left Paris for Madrid with some British journalists. Then he disappeared and I never heard of him again.

It is a little difficult to read his hurried writing. The letter is dated April, 1937, and begins abruptly:

Here was the battle. The battle of Trijueque, of Granajeros. All around me there is destruction in the fields.

Here the defeat of our enemy began; the defeat of an enemy which had resisted for many hours, yet was put to flight by our troops. Here among the olive trees and the wheat, surrounded by new budding life, we have won a great, decisive battle. There is new spring life and spring death around me. Telegraph poles have been uprooted, trees burned to charcoal, there are innumerable shellholes. And gory bodies, bits of shrapnel, destroyed lorries. In the narrow lanes and on the high road . . . everywhere corpses. In the mud, half naked, a new kind of "memento mori." And yet there is life. Life after death. These days Nature seems to be offering life with tenfold intensity in these parts of Spain. Close to the corpses the bushes are covered with tiny, pale-green leaves and pink wild roses.

We are near Trijueque on the Aragon road, many miles from Madrid. The metallic noise of the 75 mm. guns, the deep-throated roar of the 155 mm.s remind you that the war is still very near.

The enemy is in retreat. The guns have been brought forward. We are now closer to Grajaneros, the tiny village is on our left. A few grey houses with curious roofs. A small, pretty, unimportant village, a station of victory like Valfermoso, Utande, Mudeux, Valdearenas and the other places of battle.

Peasants pass us with carts piled high with furniture, clothes, food. The painful exodus of war. They are returning to their homes. But they won't find any homes. Everything has been destroyed. The retreating enemy is burning everything—the revenge of helplessness.

Now the rain starts; it is raining for hours, the sky is grey and the landscape becomes more and more dreary. I feel as if life had gone for ever. Perhaps this is the end of the world.

We pass some soldiers, wearing the "capote," the cross between the South American poncho and the British Tommy's overcoat.

A coat by day, a blanket by night. They march silently in the mud. They look tired, but they feel that they are victorious. The clouds almost hang to the ground. It is cold and damp.

Dusk falls, the gunfire still rolls in the distance. The soldiers are sprawling, exhausted, dirty in the mud; they stare at the corpses on the roadside. There is a young soldier here, he cannot be more than twenty. His face is like a schoolboy's; I am sure he has not expected death. He is lying quietly, with a serious expression; no trace of wound. How many years of hope he carried! His parents, thinking of his successful future. A girl waiting to be married to him . . . as soon as he made enough money. . . . And he did *make money, received his pay, but . . . he had to give too much for it. There are some sodden flowers close to his head.*

We turn back towards Madrid. Someone says that we can expect sunshine to-morrow. . . .

Sunshine? We are thirsty—for rain and warmth alike. But you cannot have both in Spain.

This is *how* Spain died. But when did she die? I do not know. And when I try to compose her epitaph, the date must remain blank. Born . . . before Charlemagne, before the Vandals and the Moors. Died? Who knows?

II

Before the long, cruel agony started, most people thought that Spain was a fertile, lazy country, where people had little to do but to breathe. . . . And when I visited Spain for the first time I found it difficult to abandon this conception. The truth is that, apart from the mouths of the rivers and certain districts in the south, the landscape is poor, hard and barren. In the endless perspective, brown sandy soil alternates with bare cliffs. There are broad expanses filled with immense blocks of stones shaped in bizarre images. A European desert of stone. In this world life can never be a gentle, regular ebb and flow. Everything points to menace and resistance which man must face and subdue. The farms are not separated in proud and secure solitude, but huddled together like wild horses pursued by the wolf. The houses form a circle with their doors inside the circle —one sees only roofs and walls with a single, well-secured gate.

An unforgettable experience, to drive for hours across this high plateau. Riders on mules passed from village to village in

picturesque loneliness. We saw great flocks of sheep, the shepherds enveloped in blankets, wearing big, flapping black hats, and carrying long staffs in their hands. They stood motionless, as if they had rooted for all time in their Biblical impassivity.

This is the setting which has produced the *saëta*, the song of lament, of longing and melancholy which most poignantly expresses the Spanish soul. Its sadness, wildness, solitude have been infused, as unyielding and essential elements, into all that is typical Spanish culture.

What of Spanish art? What a contrast it offers with its gloomy passion to the art of almost every other nation. You can observe it already in the colouring, the original of which can be discerned so clearly in the Spanish landscape. Perhaps a day will come again when we shall have leisure and liberty to study the unknown primitives of the fifteenth century in the Prado. The gold which these painters used for their backgrounds or for the haloes of their saints is utterly different from that of the Italians; it is a golden, rusty tobacco brown—the colour of Spanish soil, of Spanish mountains. Nor is their blue pure—it is bluish-green; their greens are dark, their reds are tinged with black. If you turn from these pictures to those in one of the adjoining rooms—to the Dutch artists, for example—you will realize at once the whole difference between Spanish and Dutch climate and landscape. In Holland life was idyllic, comfortable, fair-haired and honest—instead of the Spanish passion the Dutch had "moods" . . . they glorified the burgher, whereas the Spaniards worshipped the knight.

This is, of course, no new discovery. But to see and to understand has never been the same thing. I maintain that for the full appreciation of Spanish art one must first have seen the Spanish country-side.

In my lazy and haphazard pilgrimage through Spain—made possible by the money I had earned as a newspaper correspondent in sensible and sober England—the three Spanish painters who aroused in me the deepest emotion, the most enduring thrill were Ribera, El Greco and Goya . . . each typically Spanish, and yet each possessing a distinct individuality. Ribera is a Spanish Rubens, but where the Flemish master is light-hearted, Ribera is gloomy. His art is like a wine with a red glow, a fatal passion finding its expression in robust sensuality. The similarity between Rubens and Ribera lies more in their subjects than in their spiritual attitudes. Ribera is a powerful dynamic person-

ality ; he seems to be ruled by a desire for restless movements, lines and masses sweep, wave and tower in his pictures—the spectator cannot find in front of them any opportunity for contemplative concentration. El Greco—at least to me—is the refined, dual man who never leaves the magic circle of his own ego ; all his figures grow up like flowers or plants ; we discover his thin, sensitive hands, his elongated, aristocratic face again and again. He is sensitivity personified, now tortured by pain, now in the ecstasy of happiness ; one moment lost in brooding, the next blessed by the light of an unearthy revelation. He is the *alter ego* of Don Quixote—though some might quarrel with this parallel. But there *is* an affinity akin to that between genius and madness. These two have been likened to fruits of the same tree : the one ripens, reddens, fills with sweet juice ; the other remains green, shrunken and falls worm-eaten to the ground. El Greco is the master of human reality, the proportions are not distorted in his work, he presents his types with perfect clarity . . . but nevertheless one feels that if he had gone a single step further he might have produced a caricature . . . a spiritual Don Quixote. We all know that there is only a hair's breadth between the sublime and the ridiculous and this no-man's land might be the most important thing in art.

It may seem daring to try to prove the essential national qualities of Spanish art through Ribera and El Greco. After all, Ribera worked in Italy and some critics classify him with the Italian painters. El Greco was an immigrant who never felt really at home in the grey landscape of Castille and among all its serious, gloomy people. When he wanted to escape the stiff Spanish world he sent for Venetian musicians and he even signed his pictures with Greek letters to emphasize his alien origin. But all this, I feel, strengthens rather than weakens my argument. The power of Spanish soil over the human spirit could not be proved more convincingly. One has but to look at Ribera's portraits. The wrinkles and furrows, the often distorted features betray a frightening realism. No Italian would have painted this way. Ribera was the son of a *conquistador* and *matador* nation : he was insatiable in his presentations of human beings and his preoccupation with human suffering bordered on sadism. As for El Greco—the source of his fantastic licentiousness, his powerful need for expression, so unexpected in a refined, deeply cultured man, is the thirst for dreams for boundless imagery. Such thirst can be endured nowhere except in the eternal

monotony of solitude which is to be found on these lofty, bare, mountain-framed plateaus.

For Ribera the Spanish soil was a baptismal gift. For El Greco it was daily food and drink. For Goya it was both heritage and fate. He was of peasant stock and spent most of his days on the land. In the Prado three smaller rooms and one large hall are—or were—reserved for his pictures. It was the large room which I entered first and I thought that my eyes were playing me tricks. I refused to believe either the catalogue or the small brass plates on the frames. Was this indeed Goya? A refined, almost dandified artist whose eyes might have been those of a Frenchman, an Italian, a Dutchman! Superb technique—an entire cross-section of different influences, a rich mine for the historian of art . . . but nothing more. Disappointed, I passed into one of the smaller rooms. Here everything was different. A different strength, different colouring, a different artist. This was the lonely, severely tried Goya—Goya the genius. Opposite me was a painting that showed two men fighting with clubs—swinging their heavy weapons in a murderous fury. The background was a sulphurous, yellow sky, framed by dark-grey mountains above which heavy storm-clouds hung portentously. What a contrast with the pictures in the large gallery! There the figures stood in smooth silken garb against the background of a wooden, stiff landscape. Velasquez loved to pose his men and women against such a theatrical back-drop which, however perfect in its artificiality, was still but stage scenery, not nature. But the later Goya enlivened dead matter through his spirit. Figures and landscapes were merged into a single, indivisible, living entity.

Here Goya is as "Spanish" as only Goya can be! One of the pictures is called "The Witches' Sabbath." The witches' faces are as if formed with naked fingers out of masses of clay; furrowed as if by flying fragments of steel; distorted into the semblance of apes. Their mouths are open, the human mask has fallen. Surely the phantasies of an ill man? Yes, no doubt—but his illness has burned away all that was acquired, all that sprang from culture and laid bare the original, the fundamental . . . Spanish fear and Spanish obsession . . . the Spanish horror of which the sterile mountain landscape is the primary inspiration. Goya has recovered in these pictures his primeval originality . . . in a certain sense he has come home. You can see it best in his colours. It is the same with all great Spanish painters.

It has been often pointed out that Spanish painters were

mainly interested in the extraordinary, the unusual, the pregnant —personified in the hero, the martyr, the grotesque. One could almost say that it was the *grandiose*. In this inclination all classes and professions of Spain have been united—the painters and writers, priests and knights, bull-fighters and inquisitors, explorers and missionaries, founders of empires and builders of armadas, scoundrels and saints. Look at Calderon. His plays are studded with expressions like " the greatest deed the world had ever seen " or " I am always attracted by the monstrous." Superlatives, all the way through. And the three painters I have cited also expressed themselves in superlatives : Ribera with his unsurpassed realism, El Greco with his visions from a super-sensual world where, under the pressure of spiritual, the human body has almost divorced itself from matter and Goya with his horrible human faces which reflect every human conception of sin.

Spanish character is ruled by an all-powerful polarity, the might of contrasts. There is no psychological twilight here. In one stride, Goya descends from courtly elegance, pomp, smooth superficiality, into a world of animalized men, and both extremes he reproduces with the same over-emphasis.

" The Spaniard does not hesitate. He has realized for many centuries that hesitation ends in doubt and that doubt is the most devastating spiritual malady," said Ortega y Gasset in a preface to Serge Rovinsky's drawings published in the volume *L'Espagne grandiose et fantastique.*

I recall the moment when, on our trip across the Spanish high plateau, we reached the wildest and rockiest place I had ever seen. For miles around not a single blade of grass was visible. And suddenly before our eyes, like a mailed fist in the middle of this stubborn landscape arose the walled city of Avila. No fewer than thirty watch-towers confronted us from the side that we were approaching. This was the Middle Ages, Spanish strength and hardness, but also something else . . . Above the broad bastions, rising and dipping as our road rose and dipped, the immense square of Avila Cathedral hovered skywards. The Iron Virgin—most dreaded machine of torture—and the Madonna—not as hostile powers, not as irreconcilable contrasts but as allies . . . Symbol of the *ecclesia militans.* Striving towards heaven and bloody reality—in these words, I felt, was embodied the whole history of Spain, richer, perhaps, than that of any other nation in cruelty and the desire for salvation.

It has been said that most of the Castilian towns still live in a distant century; that they are stragglers of the great marching columns of history. This is more true of Avila than of any Castilian town. And yet she is something more than an empty suit of armour—for her soul is alive. Avila is the birthplace of St. Theresa. This fact suddenly occurred to me—and it was like a flash of a revelation. Throughout a long winter in Budapest I had spent most of my waking hours in studying the life and writings of St. Theresa. It was my last attempt to save my faith in a personal God and His Church. But had I comprehended what I learned? Oh, I had made notes and tried to penetrate beyond the words . . . but what else? Had I realized that she could have been no different from what she was, that her visions destroyed mountains of doubt, that her love of Heaven had cleansed her heart of all wordly dross? No, it was only in Avila that I fully understood all this. Not even her glittering symbolism, so perfectly reproducing the spirit of Spanish chivalry, had shown me the essentials of her character. To her the cross and sword had never been conflicting ideas. They held together in her eyes as firmly as the mighty bastions and the cathedral walls of her birthplace. She urges us to perform "great deeds" here on earth so that we may win eternal glory—and in her plea she makes use of a proud, convincing parable. When the crusaders set forth to conquer the Holy Land, she says, their deeds were praised by noble women. But those who set forth to conquer the Kingdom of God on earth, are praised by angels. The chosen of the spirit must possess courage and more than courage; the saint compares them to the standard-bearers who march ahead visible to all while all eyes follow them. They must not falter or retreat. "Truly it is fine, it is glorious, to march ahead of all; to whomsoever God has given this task, he has received a unique blessing; but at the same time he has shouldered no light burden."

III

I saw Avila rise and disappear again among the steep cliffs on a day of frosty, clear light that El Greco knew so well to paint. Twelve years have passed. It is the end of summer and rain knocks softly at my window. I turn over these notes that I made on St. Theresa. On an already faded page I find a fragment of a conversation which forms part of Maurice Barrès' introduction

to an edition of the Saint's commentary on the Song of Songs. It is a conversation between a doubter and a believer.

" *The doubter :* What is the value of all this ? I have come from Nothing only to sink back once more into Nothing.

" *The believer :* I do not know whence you come and where you go. But do you never feel thirst ?

" *The doubter :* Of course I do.

" *The believer :* Well then, you must drink. It is no use to fight against reverie and longing whenever they overwhelm us. ' But my ideas, my mind ! ' you cry. What use is all that ? The thirst remains."

Theresa's voice echoes in these words. Was not her whole life a cry of longing on that dry, rough, ever-thirsty Spanish soil ? Privation and unsatisfied longing were the blessings God had given her, guiding her soul beyond all human understanding.

That day when I saw Avila, fantastic and grandiose, Spain became for me reality.

IV

No wonder that after Avila almost everything turned into an anti-climax. Even the Prado or the gloomy pomp of the Escorial.

Dutifully I drove up Montserrat, the Mountain of the Holy Grail. I sat on the rocks where, according to legend, Richard Wagner conceived the overture of *Parsifal.* The sun was setting beyond the crags and pilgrims were singing in the monastery courtyard.

Legend has it, too, that the holy vessel of the Grail had been kept on Montserrat. Here Amfortas writhed on his bed of torture, here Parsifal trembled in the miraculous garden of Kundry. The black Madonna, miraculous Mother of God, is venerated in the eight-hundred-year-old church, a mysterious smile on her ebony face. For many centuries Benedictine monks have guarded her. Because of her, every year a quarter of a million men and women make the pilgrimage to this solitude of Montserrat, and in the place where once stood the Holy Grail—now knee-deep in legends—her dark brow has been circled with golden diadems by faithful piety.

We had set out early in the morning from Barcelona ; a mixed company of many nations in motor-coaches. I shared my coach with a German, a Spaniard, several Frenchmen, a few English and two Scandinavians. We stopped on our way to have a second breakfast of big dark-blue grapes—and in two and a half

hours our coach backed into the spacious garage of Montserrat. We found a large hotel, shops, a post office and a funicular to the top of the mountain—and a broad flight of stairs leading to the monastery.

Legend has it that that Black Madonna was found by shepherds. A thousand years ago—or thereabouts—they saw flames emerging from a cleft in the rocks. When they had witnessed this awe-inspiring phenomenon on eight successive Saturdays, they thought they ought to inform the bishop. This they did, and the bishop discovered the Madonna. He desired her for his own Cathedral and proceeded to escort her there, but as the procession reached the site of the present church, she became so heavy that it was impossible to carry her farther. So the church was built around her, and there she still reigns, on her head a golden crown studded with rubies and emeralds, in her hand a silver sceptre.

After the ceremonial mass one of our company—an Englishman—proposed that we should try to climb one of the rocky crags, shaped like a thumb, for some mysterious reason called "Uncle Barney." Its height was about a hundred and thirty feet, but its surface seemed to offer few friendly footholds. Four of us took up the challenge. It was certainly an international climbing party for it comprised a German, a Spaniard, a Hungarian and a Swede, with an Englishman as leader.

As if by magic, the Englishman produced climbing-irons and a few dozen feet of rope. The undertaking proved less formidable than we anticipated, but once or twice while swinging over space and calculating the chances of being broken to bits in the valley below us, I for one was inclined to wish I had not joined in the adventure. However, when at last we stood on the top of "Uncle Barney's" bald head we agreed that the achievement amply rewarded the effort. The monastery, the hotel and the other buildings were hidden from us and we saw only the vast wilderness of the Sierra, monstrous contrast of pinnacle and abyss. Yes, this was the country of the Holy Grail, the unattainable, where miracles might happen daily and people lived in close communion with God and his host of angels.

On our way back to Barcelona our chauffeur decided to break all speed records for the distance. He kept up a consistent sixty miles an hour, even along the deepest canyons, when the wheels cleared the edge of the precipice only by a few inches. Behind me a young Frenchman with chattering teeth was repeating the

Lord's Prayer. A nightmare trip it was, and when we reached the prosaic level it took us some little time to recover from the shock of it. Lights glinted in the distance and in a little while we were standing among the shimmering multi-coloured fountains of the Barcelona World Exhibition.

V

I have not been quite truthful when I said that after Avila everything had been anti-climax. For I had an experience in Spain which would be very hard to forget. It was so incredible and yet so much in keeping with the Country of Eternal Thirst. Thirsty for water, for blood and for solace to the senses tortured by drought and man-made cruelty. . . . An adventure which still beckons to me through the haze of years like a mirage. Yet I know it did actually happen and if I had the address of the young American journalist who shared it with me I could produce his supporting testimony.

We were trying to get to Seville, but we had suspected for an hour or more that we were hopelessly lost. It was pitch-black and there was not a soul on the road—when the young American twisted the wheel and jammed on the brakes. The car stopped with a screech and there was a faint, long hiss of air escaping from the tyres. We climbed out to find three of them punctured.

"Holy smoke!" shouted the young American, whose name for conversational purposes was Jerry. "I know that these Spaniards are not partial to motorists . . . but this is a bit too much . . ."

He was contemplating a methodical pattern of two-inch nails across the road.

"We must walk," I announced like a good fatalist.

"What a brain!" Jerry sneered, and added gloomily: "I hate walking. I don't think we are going to enjoy this walk. If they put nails on the road for cars, they're probably welcoming pedestrians with shotguns. However, as the gangster said when they took him for a ride, there's no use grumbling if you have no choice. But I don't like it, me lad, I don't like it."

Jerry was a professional pessimist, for ever prophesying the worst possible end to all human enterprises. As the world was steadily going from bad to worse his prophecies usually turned out to be correct, which made him a very successful journalist.

"Look here," I told him now, "there may be a story in

this—I mean, these nails can't be the work of peasant urchins. Why not follow it up ? "

" O.K., babe ! Anything for a quiet life—and a bonus," he said.

We pushed the car to the side of the road, locked it, and set out. It was a warm, soft, perfumed night ; the stars seemed to touch the earth. But no one, in Jerry's company, could indulge in sentimental musings about the night of Spain, starlight or love. He began to recount stories of his newspaper career in various American cities and while almost all of them were dirty, they were also funny.

Suddenly he stopped.

" I declare," he said, " these people who were scattering nails instead of roses must be very thorough fellers. Look at this."

I looked. In front of us the whole breadth of the road was blocked with boulders. Each must have weighed at least a ton and we wondered how many people had been needed to roll them on to the highway.

" Watson, I am getting kinda interested," Jerry said. " Come, on, let's do some snooping."

But although we found a great many footprints beyond the rocks, there was no other clue. So we marched on. Soon the road began to climb and Jerry to grumble and curse with fluency. He cursed his profession, Spain and the universe. The road ended abruptly and we found ourselves on a high ridge from which we looked into a small valley which seemed to be blazing with light. Though several hundred feet above it we could see everything clearly. There was a small town there, a walled town looking like the small-scale model of a fairy city, with crooked streets, old, gabled houses, half-a-dozen churches, an oblong market-place and quaint gardens. We were gazing at all this as if through a telescope—we could see the weather-cocks on the roofs, washing gleaming white in the moon—which had risen during our walk—and the townsfolk.

A fantastic procession was moving slowly through the tortuous alleys and lanes. The smoking torches were like winking red eyes.

" Well, I'll be——" muttered Jerry, for once at a loss for words.

" Some fiesta, don't you think ? " I asked, unconsciously lowering my voice.

" It must be a queer one if they discourage visitors with two-

inch nails and piles of rocks," he said. " But we might as well take a look at these curious people . . ."

A little distance to the left we found a hidden path which resembled a staircase with roughly-hewn steps. In about fifteen minutes we reached the centre of the town. And now we saw that these men and women, moving slowly and gracefully to the music of many instruments, were dressed in the fashion of a remote period; the women wore strange, tall head-dresses while the men sported doublets and close-fitting jackets with slashed sleeves. They were singing and seemed to be oblivious of us. At intervals the procession paused and flagons of wine were passed round by boys and girls dressed in the same strange garb of an older age. We might have been watching the dress-rehearsal of some opera—or a majestic pageant—but staged for—well, for whom and for what reason?

Suddenly a girl came over to us. The torch light threw a rosy glow on her soft lips and smiling eyes. She wore a gown of deep purple velvet and over her low-cut bodice a magnificent necklace of emeralds. She grasped Jerry's hand—and the next moment they both were lost in the throng of dancers.

I stared after him, but he vanished round a corner.

A few moments later a second girl, even more charming than the first, came up to me. She said something in rapid, idiomatic Spanish which I could not understand and drew me among the dancers. She gave me wine from a brass goblet, strong, heady stuff which made me dizzy and irresponsible. Could I be dreaming, I wondered; but my arm hurt when I pinched it. Yet, it *was* a dream—a dream that lasted the entire night. Through the night we continued to move in a slow rhythm along the winding streets, pausing at intervals for wine. I inhaled the sweet, intoxicating perfume of my companion. I saw a ring on one of her slender fingers flash in the torchlight. Soon I had surrendered to the spell of the rhythmic movement—I even tried to join in the low-pitched singing.

I have little clear recollection of that night of shadows and voices, of dance and song. Once we stopped for quite a long time in the main square and listened to a fat gentleman who made a speech from a balcony. An excellent speech it must have been, to judge from our applause. Then we moved on again. And later, much later—somewhere in the velvety darkness—I felt lips on my own, arms around my neck, and the night was blotted out in the warm bli[illegible] of love . .

When I awoke to a fresh, sunny morning, I was lying in the car, covered with a rug, Jerry snoring peacefully at my side.

I dug my elbow into his side. He grunted, opened his eyes and closed them again.

"Go away," he mumbled, "I want that girl."

I shook him awake.

"What girl?" I demanded, though I knew perfectly well.

"We couldn't have dreamed it," Jerry said later. "How could two fellers dream the same nonsense? Besides . . ."

He opened his left hand, in the palm of which lay a small pearl.

"She gave it to me," he said.

We sat for a long time, enchanted, disenchanted. Then Jerry heaved himself out of the car.

"Hell!" he said. "I suppose we must get back to Barcelona. But how?"

We started to walk back on the road. Soon we came to a town and a garage. Three hours later we were sitting on the Rambla and the porter of our hotel was telephoning about new tyres.

For the rest of the day we talked little and even avoided each other's eyes. A week later we entertained at dinner an old Spanish count, a very proud and very poor gentleman, to whom Jerry told our story.

"You were fortunate, gentlemen," the old Hidalgo said solemnly, ". . . very fortunate indeed. . . ."

And then he told us the legend of Tarrasena as it was still repeated in sunny plazas and during the intervals of bull-fights. Centuries ago, it seems, Tarrasena was besieged by the Moors. The inhabitants knew that they had little hope of resisting, having built their city in a deep valley, close to the only stream of the district. While the Moorish camp-fires glimmered from the surrounding heights, they determined to hold a last fiesta, a sort of death-orgy, decreeing that all should be free—song and wine and women. But next morning the Moorish army was defeated by an army of Castilian knights and the city was saved.

Once a year the people of Tarrasena celebrate their wonderful deliverance with a commemorative fiesta, in which again everything is free—song and wine and love. Into such a festival we had intruded—intruders we were, for Tarrasena, even when she "lets herself go," yet retains a sense of propriety and does not welcome visitors—hence the blocking of the only highroad leading to the town. But if, despite these defences, strangers,

like ourselves, stray into the town, they are incorporated into the merry-making—even to a full share of their freedoms.

Such was the gist of the old nobleman's story, told with many flowery digressions and in slightly rusty English. After he had finished there was a little pause, broken by Jerry with an oath. "Damn it," he said, "what a story!"

"Why don't you make use of it?" I asked.

"You sap," he answered affectionately. "Do you know any editor who would swallow such a yarn? There's no such unbelievable thing as truth."

And that was what I felt when I turned my back to Spain. But I knew that the thirst remained—the terrible, unslaked thirst for blood, tears and the Kingdom of God.

Seven

Les Portugais
Sont toujours gais
Qu'il fasse beau, qu'il fasse laid,
Les Portugais
Sont toujours gais.

VANELOO and LETERRIER

Happy are the nations without a history.

SAUDADE

I

THERE ARE some words that are the despair of the translator. *Saudade* is one of them. The etymologists tell us that it is derived from the Latin *solitudo*, the French and English *solitude*. But solitude or loneliness has only a distant affinity with the essence of *saudade*. The German *Sehnsucht* and *Wehmut* are a bit closer, but they certainly do not express identical ideas.

If the Lame Devil of Le Sage would lift the roofs from the Portuguese houses, he would find *saudade* in every room. It is the stigma, the keynote, of Portugal; vivid or smudged, brightly

coloured or a little faded, it is to be found on every Lusitanian. You find it from the Minho to Cape Sao Vincente ; but whatever large stocks there are in the country it is not like port, sardines or cork, for export.

The Portuguese possesses a strongly lyrical character. He is contemplative and introvert. He is dominated by soft sadness, not by effervescent gaiety. The operetta of Lecocq has given the world an absolutely false picture of his nature. No, they are not *toujours gais*, in spite of the ladies and gentlemen of the chorus who made this assertion on almost every musical comedy stage in the world.

Nor are they a dynamic people. Salazar, the strangest European dictator, had his work cut out when he tried to galvanize them into action. The strong emotional elements in their character are retarding their will power. The glorious pages of their history have not given them wings—on the contrary, they seem to be overwhelmed and discouraged by them. They look back on their great past as on a dream. They never set themselves unattainable aims ; faced with some difficult task, they are apt to recoil like a frightened horse at the water-jump. They strive only for achievements which do not demand special exertions ; homely, simple, everyday goals which yield a modest satisfaction.

Southerners are always affected by their climate, and this is markedly the case in Portugal. The lazy, enervating influence of sun and soft breezes is indeed rather more pronounced here than in other Latin countries. To plan, to dream of daring exploits—yes, any Portuguese is prepared to do that. But to translate those plans into action ? How much more deeply satisfying to remain just a figure in the landscape ! Yes, better than weary achievement is it to contemplate the ocean from the top of a cliff, to gape into the starlit infinite, losing oneself in the Milky Way ; to fill one's eyes with the faded blue of the Estrella or listen to the melancholy pipes of shepherds. Reality is an illusion—every life is a dream. Why should one pursue butterflies ? They are certain to escape. Why stretch forth covetous arms towards the clouds ? They are for ever beyond your reach. Better a back seat in history's theatre where you will not detect the players' make-up or discover that the baronial hall is nothing but lath and canvas.

The *saudade* is to a certain extent related to that strange and restless feeling which the German Jean Paul called *Weltschmerz*,

which Chateaubriand introduced to French literature and which found in Byron, Lermontov, Leopardi and Lenau its main representatives. In this vague emotion trouble merges with trouble; it is difficult to differentiate between our own grief and that of others; in our own sadness is comprehended the sadness of all.

Saudade is the kind of sadness which defies complete analysis. Why is one sad? Because. It is a *l'art pour l'art* gloominess, immaterial and intangible as the soul itself.

It has also an element of self-torture, a kind of spiritual masochism. It is plaintive—when there is no real reason for complaint. Repentance for sins committed in a dream. A flagging of energy, a despair which flares up and dies away again. Homesickness even when at home; loneliness in the midst of a crowd. Longing for sweetness which melts on the tongue; desire for a ring which you wear on your finger. The smile that hurts; tears of joy. *Saudade* reaches its climax in the moment when you burst into tears—for every reason and no reason at all. The more I try to explain it the more difficult it becomes. It is a malady which cannot be diagnosed, which no X-ray brings to light, which has no bacteria. An insatiable hunger, an unquenchable thirst. It shines like a *solitaire* in the framework of flesh and blood which is the Portuguese.

Strangely enough the Portuguese does not find it a burden. On the contrary, he is exhilarated. If you ask him whether he would like to get rid of it, he will shake his head. For it contains a mixture of joy, of enjoyment. Perhaps it is not conscious, nor is it completely instinctive. It's just like a slight touch of 'flu, a light fever which rates you chicken broth and ice cream without even a headache.

And in the final analysis, in spite of Dr. Salazar, *saudade* is Portugal—at least the Portugal of yesterday.

II

But the *saudade*, though a dominant factor of the Portuguese national character, has left space for other things—songs, for example. There have always been songs in Portugal. Did not the original inhabitants claim descent from Lusus, son of Bacchus? Only the rhythm slowed down, the melody became more mournful with the passing of the centuries, until, early in the nineteenth century, the *fado* was born. The *fado*—

heartbreak made musical. " The Portuguese sings when he feels like crying . . ." a famous *fado* begins and he always feels like crying. . . . The hoarse crooner of the Lisbon cafés, the itinerant musician of country inns, students at the marble fountains of Coimbra—they all sing the *fado*.

I must confess, however, that I myself did not hear a *fado* during my stay in the country—or rather I only heard a record of one, played on a friend's gramophone. For the new Portugal frowns upon the *fado*. Though not officially banned, it has become taboo to all supporters of the Salazar régime, in whose eyes it is the symbol of national defeatism.

The word itself is identical with the Latin *fatum*—fate. And *fado* does appear to exude a sickly fatalism, a weak nostalgia for the irrevocable past and a spineless resignation. It has been asserted that the *fado* is not indigenous to Portugal at all ; folklore experts have discovered in it an affinity with the exotic music of the Congo.

" Happy are the nations without a history." But civilization certainly has been served by those nations which possessed a history—at least in the past. Only by those nations who have acquired with blood and sweat the patent of nobility. And there are few nations who have a more rightful claim to this than Portugal. We are too apt to regard the Portuguese as poor relations of the Spaniards living in the Peninsula on sufferance. Yet in truth Portugal is a geographical entity ; her people have always been distinct from the Spaniards. A proud motto proclaims that " Portugal turns her back on Spain to embrace the ocean."

On the map it is difficult to discover a natural borderline between the two countries. But a climate map immediately discloses a sharp contrast. Portugal is a clearly defined, fertile oasis in the Peninsula. Her climate is oceanic, her valleys and mountain slopes are exposed to the humid sea breezes. Her eastern political frontiers have never changed. European culture is characteristically a culture of oases. The soil of Portugal was European long before that of Spain, which in many a sense still belongs to Africa.

The Minho, Douro and Tejo were necessarily the home of a separate nation. Portuguese history is amazingly varied and colourful. Until the sixteenth century it was an organic part of European progress and culture. Legend has it that Ulysses sailed to these shores and founded the town of Ulissipo, the

present-day Lisbon. Greece was followed by Carthage and Rome, the overlordship of the legions yielded to three hundred years of Svabian and Visigoth kings. Then almost four centuries of Moorish rule, until they were ejected by the armies of Christendom under Alphonso VI. The Kingdom of Portugal was founded in 1139. Spain annexed it in 1580. The Dynasty of Braganza began to fight for national independence eighty years later. But this fight proved to be the beginning of decline, for, with the loss of her overseas possessions—Brazil seceded in 1822—there set in a hundred years of rapid degeneration. Yet the centuries have been studded with brilliant figures, from Henry the Navigator to Bartholomew Diaz, from Vasco da Gama to Albuquerque, d'Almeida, Camoëns and—just before the Napoleonic Wars—the Marquis Pombal.

The Portuguese brought treasures of India and China to the Mediterranean, ousted the Arabs from the monopoly of the Indian trade, founded settlements at Suez, and in the Persian Gulf, and raised Lisbon to the status of the Continent's greatest port. Portuguese navigators discovered Brazil. It was natural that the Pope should divide the world outside Europe between Spain and Portugal, leaving all other nations to fight for their share as best they might without his blessing.

Little wonder that when the educated Portuguese remembers the past his face becomes darker than the coffee he sips in the booth of some *brasileiro*. Little wonder that the *fado*, crying for greatness and beauty gone beyond redemption, has become characteristic of Portugal psychology. Even Salazar, who has done so much to reform and rebuild his country, writes sadly in one of his articles: "Our glorious past lays heavily upon our present. We alone could boast of a Vasco da Gama, a Joao da Castro, an Albuquerque, of all the triumphs in India; but behind and after us unheroic British merchants created more or less unconsciously a great empire. We had our Don Joao, our Alphonso V who crossed the Straits of Gibraltar and conquered North Africa; yet Morocco is ruled by France and Spain to-day. We were proud of our Pedro Alvares Cabral, of our Jesuit Missions, of Brazil; but although Brazil was the proudest treasure of our colonization and it still has the biggest proportion of our fellow-countrymen, these have been forced into manual labour and social decline while Germans and Italians have gained the upper hand. We showed the great ocean routes to all nations of the world, were pioneers of sailing and fishing; but

to-day we are buying our tunnyfish from Norway and our goods are transported in British and Dutch ships. . . ."

At the outbreak of the first World War Portugal had fifty admirals and one cruiser—the forty-year-old *Vasco da Gama*. And although General Crozier's book was withdrawn, the serious allegations that it contained of the Portuguese soldiers' inefficiency and cowardice at the Battle of Armentières (he found them not merely ill-equipped, but with their sentries actually asleep at their posts on the night of the big German offensive) were generally accepted by military experts. And the French verb " portugaliser," which became well known in Latin countries, had a most contemptuous implication.

Between 1910 and 1926 Portugal has survived sixteen revolutions and forty-three different governments; her republic has had eight presidents, despite the fact that, according to the constitution, each should have served four years. Between 1820 and 1910 there had been twenty-six revolutions—quite a respectable total. No wonder that Thomasson called the book that he published in 1912 *Two European Anarchies : Turkey and Portugal*. Among the sixteen recent revolutions some were comic, others tragic. In October, 1921, the republic came very close to becoming a Communist state.

In 1926 the army took matters into its own hands—not for the first time, but now with a considerably different goal. For when General Gomes da Costa led the " parade of the ragged guard " from Braga to Lisbon he had no desire for personal power, nor to set up a dictatorship of the armed forces. It was a bloodless revolution. General Carmona, who was elected president, wanted to give his country a breathing space until someone was found who could build a lasting edifice, restore Portuguese finances and stabilize her political creed. And it was both Carmona's and Portugal's good fortune that, at this critical hour, Professor Salazar undertook to serve his country.

III

Antonio Oliveira Salazar is anything but the dictator type. Strange as it may sound in these days, he does not cling to power. Nor is he a Latin or southern type at all. He is taller than most of his compatriots. His hair is dark, his forehead high, his nose strong. His thin lips often wear an ironic smile. He talks in a soft, measured voice, but when he expounds one of his pet

theories or schemes, he pours out a flood of words. He talked in fluent and rapid French when I was granted an interview with him and I found it a strain to keep up with him. When he observed that I had not grasped all he had said, he repeated it slowly. An intrepid spirit, an impregnable will-power, seem to be his main characteristics. And, above all, an almost superhuman passion for truth and justice. " I had to sacrifice a great many things," he said, " but one I kept and guarded it jealously —the independence of my judgment of the principles I put into words, of the regulations which I propose, of the events which I cause to happen. . . ."

Léon de Poncins calls him " a lay saint." Truly he lives like a monk. He is unapproachable. A bachelor, not even the most malignant gossip is able to besmirch his name. Asceticism is apparent—alike in his private and political convictions. When I first visited Portugal he was holding four Cabinet posts : he was Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, Minister of Finance and War Minister. He himself had fixed his salary at the modest figure of 1,000 escudos—about forty pounds—a month. When he slipped on the staircase of his office and broke his leg, the Cabinet Council voted 30,000 escudos for his medical attendance, arguing that he had met with the accident while in the discharge of his official duties, but Salazar refused the money, preferring to mortgage the small farm which he had inherited in his home village.

But this asceticism does not imply misanthropy or excessive severity. In all personal contacts he is extremely friendly and attentive. He is a religious man and a lover of his fellow men. He is free from racial or religious prejudice. He is opposed to imperialistic ambitions. His patriotism is not a nostalgic, brooding emotion, living passively on the glory of the past, but an active and realistic ideology which perceives the needs of our age. He is indeed anything but a dreamer. When he discovered that to eliminate illiteracy Portugal would have to spend 500 to 600 million escudos on the building of new schools and 300 to 400 millions on the salaries of the new teachers, he organized a corps of volunteers in the small villages who do their work as a patriotic duty without pay. This, of course, was only a temporary measure until—within the framework of Salazar's fifteen year plan—all the necessary schools could be built and endowed. It illustrates, however, Salazar's grasp of detail and talent for improvization.

IV

In recent years Portugal has forsaken the *saudade* and emerged from the obscurity of revolutions and economic anarchy. And when I travelled leisurely across "Lusitania" I felt that this country deserved happiness and a future. Whether the war which we are waging now will destroy this happiness is too early to say. Salazar and his nation hope that it will not.

Humboldt, most versatile of German scientists, said of Lisbon that it was one of the loveliest cities of the world—finer in its harmonious beauty than Salzburg, Naples or Budapest. Painters and poets have praised the sunsets of Estoril. But there are many lesser-known beauty spots. I spent a day of startled admiration in the "Batalha," the Dominican monastery and church of Our Lady of Victories, erected on the battlefield of Aljubarrota as a symbol of Portugal's national independence. These buildings are among the finest that fourteenth-century Europe ever produced, though their ornate chapels are still unfinished. I saw the Monastery of St. Hieronymus with the Church of Santa Maria at Belem, where Vasco da Gama kept vigil on the eve of his departure to discover the Indies; here on his triumphant return he thanked God for bringing him home in safety. King Manoel decorated Belem with all the Eastern imagery, borrowed from India, which characterised his age. I stood on the steep Atlantic cliff of Sagras, where Henry the Navigator sat in his eyrie, proudly exclaiming: "The bounded ocean belonged to the Romans; the infinite seas are ours." Here he received reports, drew his maps; from here he dispatched his ships towards the unknown. I visited Cintra with its pine forests and palm groves rising from fields of yellow-flowering cacti. Byron had called Cintra "paradise on earth." High on the mountain-top you can see the ruins of the Moorish castle, and in the valley the former royal palace with its characteristic Moorish towers, fountains and cooling arbours. Here stood the fairy forest of Bussaco, with its thousands of eucalyptus trees, cypresses and Lebanon cedars, all transplanted from the Portuguese colonies. Carmelite monks planted and guarded them; no woman was allowed to set foot in these hallowed grounds. Then there is Tomar, reminding travellers of the hills of Tuscany, with its huge monastery fortress: home of the Knights of Christ. I wandered through the Cistercian church of Alcobaca, beneath the dim arches of which lie the richly carved marble sarcophagus

of King Pedro I, and that of his lover, Ines de Castro. They are interred foot to foot, so that on the Day of Judgment, when all the dead are resurrected, the King's first awakened glance shall fall on his sweetheart. You can visit in Coimbra " the garden of tears," where Pedro sorrowed for Ines. Pedro was then Crown Prince and Ines was a Spanish lady-in-waiting. The King's advisers opposed his affiance to a Spaniard. Ines was put into a nunnery. Pedro managed to smuggle in some letters to her through the channel of a little stream, the " Fonte dos Amores," but Fate was against the unhappy pair and Ines was tried for sorcery and executed. When Pedro became King he took a terrible revenge. He had the body of his beloved exhumed, dressed her in royal robes, and seated on a throne. All who had taken part in her doom were made to do obeisance to this royal corpse—and then ascend the scaffold.

The Portuguese landscape is filled with the traces of poets and artists. The fourth centenary of Gil Vincente, the Portuguese Molière, or even Shakespeare, perhaps, was celebrated when I was in the country. He was a typical Renaissance figure, whose boundless imagination was linked with a shrewd knowledge of human character. So was Joao da Barros, author of the *Decades*, who described the great discoveries and the subjugation of India. There were Camoens with his " Lusiados," a poet's Walhalla for the heroes of his nation, Antonio Vieiria, the great Jesuit preacher and many others. . . .

Last year marked the elapse of three centuries since Portugal severed her union with Spain. In 1939 the eighth centenary of the first Portuguese King was celebrated. And while the *saudade* fades and the *fado* becomes silenced, an ancient country is hovering between peace and war, between a precarious happiness and the misery of Hitler's " New Order." . . .

Eight

> Institutions are not enough for true democracy, it needs people who believe in the mission of their state and nation, people who are united by an idea. . . . Therefore our democracy must be constant reform and constant revolution, but a revolution of hearts and heads.

Man's whole life is a continual contradiction of what he knows to be his duty.

TOLSTOI

We Slavs: a broken circle, unfinished,
Yet ever striving to fuse and unite.
We Slavs: a cry for a distant brother,
A helping hand, a presence in the night.

KRLEZA

UNFINISHED CIRCLE

I

BEFORE EUROPE can be turned into a Continent of Good Europeans all the history books in the schools must be burned. There is not a single page of national history which does not contain a conscious or unconscious falsehood; and in their compilation the most enlightened people have been as guilty as the fiercely chauvinistic ones. We are conditioned to hate almost from the cradle; our schools should be designed to uproot this hate and replace it with understanding.

Every six months or so I would take all the school children in Europe to the nearest frontier. I would show them that beyond the guards and barriers the grass, the soil, the water, the clouds are all the same as their own. That the soldier who stands in front of his blockhouse has the same eyes, lips, hair as they have themselves; that he reacts in the same way to pain and pleasure.

The simplest truths are the hardest to prove. That is why they sound Utopian. Shakespeare knew this when he made Shylock say those lines "... Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions, fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, heal'd by the same means, warm'd and cool'd by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? ..."

Shakespeare wrote these lines for a Jew to speak; but could not any European speak them with the same effect, the same

justification to the citizen of another country? Could not a Hungarian ask the same questions of a Czech, a Pole of a Russian, a Frenchman of an Italian? We are all Jews for someone and for all of us there are individuals and nations of whose humanity we have to be convinced. Yet we seldom are convinced. We are apt to say: "Yes, I have known a Turk and he was quite a decent fellow." The fact that there are human beings beyond our own frontiers usually suggests to us the existence only of exceptional individuals. Let anyone who denies this declare that he has never identified certain nations with certain vices or—just as baselessly—certain virtues. The French are frivolous, the Italians are musical, the Austrians are light-hearted and slapdash, the Hungarians are chivalrous, the Russians are superstitious, also poor mechanics—and so on. And are we not surprised when someone reminds us of erroneously conceived characteristics of our own country which we deny hotly unless they are flattering to our ego? Sometimes these prejudices and groundless legends are so overpowering that the nation concerned begins to believe them itself. Yes, burn those history books and take the boys and girls on those trips to the frontiers. My scheme would cost infinitely less than a new battleship and be an infinitely stronger guarantee of peace. . . .

II

I realized all this dimly when I went travelling for the first time in the Slav countries of Central and Eastern Europe. I had read their poets and novelists—though far too few were available in the western languages, for they also live in glass prisons—I had listened to their music and studied their history. Yet deep in my heart I set out prepared to disapprove, to belittle, to find fault. Here, of course, I had a more hardened set of prejudices and conditioned reflexes with which to contend. Magyar and Slav have at best lived in an uneasy partnership. The Habsburgs soon realized that their rule would be most safe if they played off the different nationalities of the monarchy against each other. Czechs and Croats, Serbs and Poles, Rumanians and Ruthenians were the counterbalances to Hungarian ambition, even to Austrian precocity. Slavs and Magyars seldom made common cause against the Teuton.

In the train to Zagreb I tried to analyse my uneasy feelings. I had uncles and cousins in Jugoslavia; I had relatives who

were farming the fat, black soil of the Rumanian Banat; I had friends in Czechoslovakia. The frontiers of 1919 had cut across family ties, uprooted neighbourly relations—everything was in a muddle. If there had been a war between 1919 and 1939 involving the Central European States, kinsmen would have been firing at each other whatever countries were embroiled. One cousin of mine was a captain in the Jugoslav Army; another was a reservist in the Rumanian forces; a third had been conscripted in Czechoslovakia. Nor was my position unique. It could have been matched by dozens of my friends in Budapest.

I remember that at the age of eight my mother took me to Osijek, a small town in Croatia, now a bone of contention between Hungary and the puppet state of Ante Pavelitch. We were to spend a few months with my grandmother. I had been given a new tricycle, and I rode it everywhere, regardless of my own or anyone else's safety. One afternoon I ran into a workman who was ambling along the pavement, and sent him sprawling. When he raised himself on his elbow his head was on the same level as mine. He had coal black eyes and a thin, bitter mouth. We stared at each other for a few seconds and then he began to curse me in a low, throaty voice. It sounded more horrible than if he had shouted. I turned and fled, but some of his words stuck in my mind. In the evening I asked our Croat maid, who spoke good Hungarian, what they meant. She glanced at me curiously and at first would not answer. "He said," she told me at last, having little idea what one should or should not tell a child, "you Magyar piglet, we shall cut your throat, too, when the time comes."

For weeks afterwards I woke drenched in sweat, ridden by a nightmare in which I was a piglet and the man with the black eyes was cutting my throat. It was long before I could free myself of the childish obsession. Yet, I am perfectly certain that the Croat workman was an ordinary peaceful sort of a fellow, not in the least disposed to murder little boys even if they were Hungarians.

Perhaps my nervousness was increased and sustained by school. The only one at a convenient distance from my grandmother's house was a Croat school, and in my class I was the only Magyar. The language used for teaching was part Hungarian and part Croat. I was expected to learn the Croat alphabet, which I hated. I hated the strange accents on various consonants and what seemed such senseless words. Nor did

my class-mates do anything to make life easier for me. Almost every day, in the drawer of my desk, I found a black hand, crudely drawn on a piece of paper, with threats scrawled in Croatian. Luckily I could not understand the threats, but the meaning of the black hand was clear enough. The other boys had formed a " Secret Society for the Extermination of Hungarians in Our Form," and as I was the only Hungarian, this had an uncomfortably personal edge. I could not do much about it as the members of this secret society refused to talk my language, and I could not speak theirs. It was a happy day for me, when, after a few weeks, we returned to Budapest. But the poison that had seeped into my brain persisted through my childhood.

Two or three years later the Austro-Hungarian Empire disintegrated. Chaos and anarchy reigned both in Vienna and Budapest. The abdication of King Charles IV was more farce than tragedy; he signed a document only to repudiate it, and departed in a whirlwind of regrets, reproaches and recriminations. The weak government of Count Michael Karolyi, a well-meaning but inefficient politician, yielded to Bela Kun and his strange gang. The Hungarian Fouquier-Tinville was a small, warped hunch-back named Otto Corvin-Klein. A half-crazy journalist, named Tibor Szamuelly, became head of the Communist Terrorists until he shot himself in a village on the Austrian frontier. For five months Hungary had a Soviet Republic which had to fight on two fronts: against the peasants and counter-revolutionaries inside the country and against the Czech, Jugoslav and Rumanian armies ready to occupy as much of Hungary as they could before the peace treaties were negotiated and signed. Bela Kun fell because he could not turn his Soviet into an effective army; and the Rumanians marched into Budapest. Of all the humiliations this over-proud country has had to suffer this was the bitterest. Hungarian and German soldiers had chased Rumanian troops from Transylvania and occupied most of Old Rumania herself. Rightly or wrongly, they despised the Rumanians' fighting capacity; even the Italians they rated higher. And now these same Rumanians came marching into a starving, shivering, darkened capital, where Spanish influenza was creeping from house to house, and hope was dead. I remember the four-page newspapers that were printed on brown toilet paper with the smudged line on top: " *Censurat.*" A curfew was enforced, and there were

many small humiliations, galling to a vanquished nation when imposed not by the victor but by jackals following his trail. True, German and perhaps Hungarian officers had sent back waggon-loads of loot from Rumania; the Germans were especially fond of collecting grand pianos from the estates of the Rumanian *bojars*. But now the Rumanians proceeded to plunder Budapest and the rest of the territory they occupied in a systematic manner which belied their usually lackadaisical nature. They took all the railway engines they could find. They even stole the linen from the hospitals. Waggon after waggon rolled towards the East. When some drunken "conquerors" decided that the impressive pile of the Hungarian National Museum would offer a lucrative source of loot, a small, light-weight American general bearing the unheroic name of Bandholtz awaited them, supported by three American marines and a riding crop. His effigy in a Budapest square, complete with riding crop testifies to the fact that he saved the treasures. When at last, with very bad grace, the Rumanians withdrew and Admiral Horthy was able to enter Budapest—to restore order and institute a brief reign of anti-Communistic and anti-Semite terror—there was a very bitter taste on every tongue. All this should help to explain why Hungarians and Rumanians are such strange bed-fellows in Hitler's lunatic asylum . . .

Slowly my country climbed out from the depths of horror and despair. But the "unfinished circle," the large sweeping chain of Slavs, was around her, ever watchful. It was natural that they should be so; they were the victors, and it was their task to see that the vanquished party kept her side of the bargain. It was not their concern how the bargain had been struck; and God knows, few people in Europe could pass a just sentence upon the treaties negotiated in the Paris suburbs. It was equally natural that a strong "irredentist" movement should spring up in Hungary, directed against the Slav countries of the Little Entente. Foreign visitors always carried home with them the slogan "No, no, never!" and the words of the "Hungarian Credo" vowing that one day all should return. The barriers between Slav and Magyar were even greater than during their uneasy partnership in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It was so easy to accept the atrocity stories which Hungarians told of Czechs, Jugoslavs, Rumanians—and which the people of the Little Entente, no doubt, told their children about the Magyars. It was almost inevitable that the countries of the Little Entente

should employ spies to ferret out Hungary's clandestine military arrangements; or that Hungary should be interested in the strength of her potential enemies. Every few months there were trials *in camera*, and half a dozen men and women—usually inhabitants of the frontier districts—were sentenced to long terms in prison. This, of course, made it very difficult for Hungarians who were *not* spies to travel to the Little Entente countries where so many of them had near relations or friends. If the Czechs or Rumanians discovered that such a visitor was a reserve officer—who corresponded to the British Territorial officers—they were apt to get rough with him, however innocent he might be. Sometimes students, journalists or engineers aroused their ire, though these, too, were equally innocent of espionage. For many years the atmosphere of mutual distrust was rampant in all these countries even if, from time to time, half-hearted attempts were made to create a *modus vivendi* in Central Europe. I would be the last to deny that Hungary was at least as much to blame as the Slav states—but the Slavs must have realized by now that they were certainly not guiltless.

During my last years at the "gymnasium"—the Magyar equivalent of the British secondary school or the American college—I began to correspond with a young man of my own age who was finishing his studies in a small town of Western Hungary. He was a poet, and sometimes our verses were published in the same magazine. We exchanged long letters, and then he came to Budapest. He was a tall, shy, intense fellow; the son of a school inspector who had to leave Slovakia when the Czechs took it over. He was deeply in love with a girl who lived in the former Upper Hungary, and whom he could see but seldom. We studied together for a sort of inter-collegiate examination, to which all the secondary schools in Hungary sent a competitor in each of the five or six main subjects. During the lovely spring of 1926 he often came to the capital, or I visited him in Kaposvár. We had planned to write "immortal masterpieces" together, conquering the world of literature side by side.

Soon after I had passed my matriculation exam. I went abroad. My *Wanderjahre* lasted rather long, but when I returned for the first time to gather a little strength after many months of semi-starvation, while tramping over Europe, I enquired about my friend. I was staggered to learn that he

was in a Czech prison undergoing a sentence of five years for espionage.

Bit by bit I unravelled his story. It seemed that he wanted to visit his fiancée; but as there was some momentary tensions between Hungary and Czechoslovakia, he had been refused a *visa*. Thereupon he slipped across the frontier, without one. As he was returning, he was challenged by the frontier guards to whom, in his flustered state, he gave an unsatisfactory explanation. A military court tried him summarily, and almost before he knew what had happened he was in prison. For some months he shared the same cell with gipsies accused of cannibalism!

When he had served about nine months of his sentence the Hungarian Government effected his release, in exchange for some minor Czech espionage agents. His case was admittedly an exceptional one; yet when I met him, after his terrible experiences, a wraith of his former self, I found it very difficult not to hate our northern neighbours with all my heart. I had read Čapek's great books, listened to Masaryk's speeches, studied the democratic constitution of the young republic—this stupid and wicked affair seemed to contradict all their principles. Why? I asked my friend, and I asked myself as well. The Nazi menace was then scarcely a cloud on the European sky, yet some of us felt instinctively that Slav and Magyar would have to get together if they wanted to stem the threatening German flood. The young poet could not answer. And I have not found the explanation to this very day.

III

All these memories drifted through my mind when I went to Zagreb, the capital of Croatia. The murder of King Alexander was ten years in the future; five years separated Jugoslavia from the royal dictatorship. The country had not yet adopted its later name; it was still known as "S.H.S.," the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats (Hrvats) and Slovenes. The name itself caused trouble for, except the Serbs, none was satisfied with the order of precedence of the three main Slav nationalities. The Croats and Slovenes had been for a very long time under Austrian rule; they were westernized, and looked down upon the Serbs as upon uncultured boors. The Serbs maintained that, under the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the Croats and Slovenes had become degenerate, and that as they fought only in small numbers

on the side of the Allies, they should be content with the hegemony of the Serbs who had made so many sacrifices in the same four years of horror.

Zagreb is not truly Balkan; it more nearly resembles an Austrian garrison town. You could find such towns all over the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy from Klagenfurt to Galicia, from Western Hungary to Ljubljana. They were all a little dusty, a great deal provincial. Each of them had its central park with covered bandstand and promenade, one decent hotel and a shifting population of officers and their wives. To a certain extent they resembled the outposts of the British Empire where the pukka sahibs lived in rigorous isolation from the natives. Their culture was second-hand; the rich went to Vienna to buy their clothes, attend the Opera and perhaps a court ball or two. They were dreary spots, and no one has described them better than Stefan Zweig in his first novel, *Beware of Pity*.

The people of Zagreb were conscious of this disadvantage, and began with great enthusiasm to remove it. An immense building programme was worked out; between two of my visits, within the span of half a decade, whole districts of brand-new flat-blocks were erected in the best Western style. When I came to Zagreb in 1924 a huge dusty square named "Sajmiste," a stone's throw from the centre of the city was used as the cattle market. When I returned in 1936 it had been absorbed by the growing city, and a fine park laid out with playgrounds and swimming pools. Mestrovic, the most impressive genius that Jugoslavia has produced in her modern history, was supervising the building of a large circular gallery which was to house his own work and that of other Croat artists. A young sculptor, Antončič, was beginning to work on his gigantic sculptures, among them an equestrian statue of Marshal Pilsudski, which he finished two days before the outbreak of the German-Polish war. When the Germans offered to take it over and erect it in much-bombed Warsaw, he replied indignantly that it would be sacrilege. I have often wondered what happened to him when Croatia was bullied into joining the jackals of the Axis . . .

At first I felt somewhat uncomfortable in Zagreb. The main square was built around the statue of Jelachich, the great "Ban" of the Croats, whom I had been taught at school to regard as the traitor who had led an army against the Hungarians during

the Magyar War of Independence in 1848–9; who had stabbed my country in the back for a bribe from the Habsburgs. Strossmayer, too, the fiery bishop, leader of Croat cultural renaissance, had his bronze monument. Had he not preached hate and resistance against the Hungarians? The Sokols—a famous Pan-Slav gymnastic and patriotic association—swaggered in their picturesque uniforms, shouldering off the pavement anyone who spoke German or Magyar. True, Serb and Croat Sokols often fought bloody battles over some fine point of national honour, but they were quick to join forces against the "Svaba," the German or the Hungarian. The shops of the narrow Ilica were pale replicas of Vienna or Budapest; and I found it most ridiculous that one of the main squares was called "TRG N" (X Square) because no one had been able to find a suitable name for it . . .

Slowly, during that long summer I spent in Zagreb I began to know and to like the Croats. They were industrious, sober—if violent in their political convictions—gay and simple-hearted. I tried to read their newspapers, which were edited with a pair of scissors and a pen dipped in vitriol; I went to their National Theatre and saw exiled Russian dancers perform the legends of the dim Slav past or sing, in barbaric splendour, the tragic tale of Boris Godunov. The Jugoslav writers, playwrights, poets, had perished almost to a man in the war; all, at any rate, who had carried in themselves the seeds of a new national literature. Only youngsters and a few middle-aged men were left. Nowhere in Europe had the war left behind such stagnation in the field of letters and art. Yet a young Croat journalist took me to the Zagreb Radio Club—this was in the days of crystal sets when any sound caught in the ether was regarded as a miracle—and there I found a crowd of keen intellectuals, desperately interested in all the mental currents of the West, eager to learn, to assimilate, to utilize the achievements of other nations for the progress of their own. I wandered through the dusty and disordered rooms of the Croatian National Museum, where the folklore and folk art of a peasant people was being separated from the faked westernized articles, lingering traces of the long Austrian overlordship. A shrewd, vulgar, courageous peasant, Stephen Radich, was the leader of the Croats and his followers resembled him. He was to be killed by the bullet of an obscure deputy of the Belgrade Skuptsina, a terrorist and unromantic "bad man"; and his successor—gentle, bespectacled Vlatko Matchek—lived

on his predecessor's prestige, until the Nazi flood swept him into obscurity . . . Zagreb was like a cripple to whom the gift of walking had been miraculously restored ; its gait hesitant, uncertain and ungainly—but undeniably walking, and walking forward.

When I visited Zagreb for the last time in July, 1939, the Serbo-Croat dispute was at its height. In April, Dr. Matchek had met the Jugoslav Premier at Zagreb to discuss Croat autonomy ; three weeks later negotiations were broken off. Then Cincar-Marcovitch went off to Berlin, and the Croats feared he had sold his country to Hitler. A hasty vote of confidence in Matchek passed by the National Croat Assembly helped but little. The Prince Regent and his wife journeyed to Rome and Germany, a pact of eternal friendship was signed with Bulgaria—and the Croats felt that they had been cheated of their birthright ; that their position, after all, was not so much better when united with their Serb brothers than under the Habsburg yoke. I had a talk with Dr. Kosutich, son-in-law of old Radich, and deputy-leader to Matchek. He was a tall, fiery man, editor of a violently Croatian newspaper. In bad but picturesque American—like so many Southern Slavs he had spent some years in the United States—he declared that Croats and Serbs would never come to an understanding ; that the Great Powers, including Britain and France, were always letting down the small countries until they, in turn, would be let down by their betrayed allies ; and that the Croats would fight for their independence to the last drop of their blood. Not quite two months after this stormy interview the Serbo-Croat agreement was signed at Belgrade, creating a Croatian province which covered more than a quarter of the total area of Jugoslavia. But as eight days later the second world war broke out, it mattered little, and perhaps Dr. Kosutich was right. Still, the Croats deserved a good deal better of history than Ante Pavelitch and his gang of terrorists or their puppet-king, the Duke of Spoleto.

IV

Another trip took me to Belgrade ; but Belgrade was not a capital, but a whispering gallery, a centre of intrigue and a most unlovely city, destroyed so often by various foes that it had lost all individuality. The Dvor was like a second-rate Swiss hotel ; the Kalimegdan, a rather dreary park without

any genuine attempt at horticulture. Raw, ugly sky-scrapers jostled tumble-down shacks. There was graft and violence in the Skupstina where highly unparliamentary expressions characterized the verbal and physical battles between the M.P.'s. It was interesting to taste *chevapchichi* and *razniczi* in the open-air restaurants and to listen to the *chemane*, the Serbian guitar which accompanied the interminable ballad about the disastrous battle of Kossowo. But Belgrade, like so many Balkan capitals, was a disappointment—and I was glad to follow an impulse, conceived long before, to visit "that certain town in Bosnia" where the spark of the world conflagration had been kindled in June, 1914. Serajevo had always held a certain fascination for me—after all, my whole generation had its life and mind determined by the shots fired in her streets. It was almost a pilgrimage to history—though I went not to pray, but to curse.

I stopped in front of a photographer's shop window that was crowded with pictures of wedding groups, rifle club meetings, young recruits and proud parents with their offspring. Most of the faces wore a fixed and unreal smile, in obedience to the photographer's injunction to "look cheerful." But above the shop window there was a black memorial tablet with an inscription in Cyrillic letters, "Here the Crown Prince of Austria-Hungary was assassinated on the 28th June, 1914 . . ."

I remember how my father told me the story, as he had heard it from one of the Hungarian detectives who was only a few yards away. The Crown Prince was sitting stiffly in the car. He did not notice the assassin; he paid little attention to the crowds; he was oblivious to the sordid existence of any "common mortal." He was staring at the mountains which rose so steeply, uncompromisingly in the middle distance. It is probable that these mountains formed the last picture held by the retina of his eyes. He was not unlike those mountains; stubborn and hard, proud and unforgiving.

When I went to Serajevo, twenty years after that June day, I was searching for the memory of those shots. It could not have been an accident that they were fired here; fanaticism must be in the air, breathed by many, to make *one* stand up at a street corner and throw away his life in order that an Archduke should be slain. But I searched in vain for some sign of this fanaticism on the faces of the young Bosnians. Their lips were not thin, their foreheads seemed to hide no secret hate. They were human, smiling or thoughtful; you could meet

similar faces in the streets of any city. Had Princip's face worn the same guileless expression?

The town was hushed. Perhaps it was still somewhat ashamed of the world notoriety which it acquired by the assassination. It seemed to be intent on diverting the tourist's attention; large posters advised him to visit the sights of the place, the Turkish district, the "East in the Heart of Europe." The slim steeples of the minarets rose in a thick cluster. Men in Oriental garb prodded lazy mules. Veiled women and little girls in pantalettes hurried along the narrow streets of the bazaar where one could buy all the things one did not need.

I stopped in the maze of the bazaar for a little while and wondered for whom all this junk was displayed. For whom these innumerable brass plates and slippers with curving toes? Some shopkeepers made no pretence of trying to attract custom; they were sitting in the depths of their shops, drinking black coffee. They looked like venerable sages, pale-brown skin and dark eyes. Cripples and beggars surrounded them in picturesque groups.

East and West is clearly defined by the beggars. The London pavement artist or match-seller will always deny indignantly that he lives on charity. No, he has something to sell. He is a merchant, entitled to the merchant's civic pride. But the beggars of the East are proud of their mendicancy. They flaunt their curved spines, loathsome wounds, Biblical blindness and other physical means of awakening pity and extorting charity. Here in Serajevo the beggars were of the East and seemed to exaggerate the already gruesome enough "props" of their profession.

I wandered into some side streets that stretch between the Turkish and the modern part of the town. Here people of the lower middle class lived among grocery shops and tiny cafés. But I felt like a stranger who had blundered into some intimate family scene, and quickly found my way back to the main thoroughfare.

I searched again for the memory of the young consumptive student who had fired those shots in 1914. Here he must have sat in one of the cafés—perhaps in the very café in which I was drinking my cup of excellent black coffee. His eyes were shining, as he listened to some political argument. Or he was coughing in the throes of a light fever like so many tuberculous youths.

To-day his name was commemorated by a bridge and ten million dead . . .

But somehow I was unable to sit still in Serajevo. I fled once more the modern town where everything was too clean and too new and returned to the Turkish section, trying to spy through the low windows, watching the mules feeding in the courtyards of the caravanserais.

I paused in front of the Begova Djamija mosque. In the courtyard there was a richly decorated fountain at which the true believers washed their feet before entering the Holy Place. A sign requested in four languages the non-Moslems not to enter the Mosque during services. But in the intervals between services the doorkeeper was soliciting tourists in the same four languages, explaining that the entrance fee was small because the mosque badly needed money for repairs. The main difference here between true believers and infidels was that the former washed their feet while the latter merely removed their shoes before entering.

I left the mosque and crossed the Miljacka river. A few hundred yards from the memorial is the Dvor, to which Francis Ferdinand was taken. He was unconscious and in a few moments he was dead. It seemed futile to brood over those moments on this mild early autumn afternoon. Yet something was hanging over Serajevo. Something of which Sophocles, Aeschylus and Euripides, were the first to tell the world.

I went back to the photographer's shop and sat down on the terrace of the small restaurant opposite. No, there was really nothing unusual to be observed. Shop, restaurant, bridge and street, the red street car pulling up at the corner—all these might belong to any city of the world; it would be inaccurate to speak of a "historical site." It seemed to me as if the house which carried the memorial tablet was protesting silently: no, it was really not responsible, all it had done was to give refuge to peaceful, humdrum people, it could not accept any historical burden. Nor could the tramcar, the photographer, the white tablecloths in the restaurant or the photographs with the friendly, fixed smiles in the shop window. No one would accept the responsibility in Serajevo . . .

But who could and who would?

V

You had to be careful in Dalmatia. If you called Dubrovnik, Ragusa; Split, Spalato; or the Island of Rab, the Island of Arbe; you were apt to receive dark looks from the Jugoslavs.

The Dalmatians are intensely nationalistic; perhaps because they feel that they have had a very narrow escape from Italian rule. From Susak, the sea-port defiantly facing Fiume across a narrow channel, to the Boka Kotorska, lives a sturdy, independent breed of seafaring fishermen, isolated to a certain extent by the chain of mountains from the rest of Jugoslavia. They have known many masters and have resented most of them. When the great republic of Ragusa was defeated by the Austrians, the patrician families vowed that they would die rather than serve the usurpers. They introduced a rigid birth-control and with the exception of two, all their families became extinct within two generations. The Turks, by denuding the mountains of timber for their ship-building, changed the climate and the character of the whole narrow strip of land between the cliffs and the sea and turned the innumerable little islands into individual strongholds. The Venetians treated Dalmatia as a colony and the Austrians ruled uneasily. The Slovenes, to whom Louis Adamic in his *The Native's Return* has paid so glowing a tribute, remain unspoiled by political upheavals and the march of civilization. They represent all that is best in the Southern Slavs: a simplicity of the spirit, thrift and good craftsmanship. Though many nations have added ingredients to the Dalmatian melting-pot, the Roman influence persists in their buildings and customs. Yet they have little in common with the mongrel-Romans of to-day; indeed, they are more distinct from the Italians than from any other race in Europe.

Dalmatia is a country where the visitor can laze without feeling guilty. A leisurely progress along the coast, with pauses to admire Spalato, the city built within the walls of an Emperor's palace, patrician Ragusa, proud Sebenico, or picturesque Cattaro, is the only way to become properly acquainted with the soul of the Dalmatian landscape. Though Dalmatia has produced many brilliant artists, her people are at one with her soil, sea and mountains.

It was on the island of Rab, with its lovely piazza and old grey stone palaces, that I met Miroslav Krleža, whom Serb friends of mine had described as the "cleverest of all living Croats." He was a tall, intense, black-haired man in the early forties, a poet, essayist and playwright. He had studied in Budapest and at the Military Academy of Pécs, a town in South-western Hungary. When, after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the Southern Slav youth were bewildered

by their new freedom, he started a magazine called *Plamen*, designed to give them guidance, and in 1924 he became editor of a monthly named *Knjizevna Republika*. He has written many plays and novels, among them a "Croat Rhapsody" and "Three Symphonies." When I asked for an interview, he replied that he did not want to meet any Hungarian. He hated Hungary, he said, and felt that the less his nation and mine had to do with each other the better for all concerned. But as I was staying on the island for a fortnight, I determined to make another effort, and this time I succeeded.

He offered me thirty minutes and gave me five hours, during most of which we quarrelled. He seemed to enjoy quarrelling. He refused to speak Hungarian, though he knew it well, having studied in Magyar schools, and as my Croatian was rudimentary, we had to fall back on German. Occasionally, however, when he wanted to elaborate a point, he forgot his resolve and lapsed into Magyar, which he spoke without a trace of Slav accent.

He told me of his unhappy youth in the Hungarian schools, where he had been contemptuously beaten and bullied because he was not, like his tormentors, a Hungarian. I countered by telling him of my own experiences in Osijek. Was it not, I asked him, the duty of men of letters to remove these prejudices? But he shook his head.

"There are some countries you cannot enlighten," he said. "Yours is one of them. Already your countrymen are up to their necks again in intrigues with Germany and Italy. They appear to have learned nothing from the past. Once again they are lining up with the losing side, and this time they will have exhausted the patience of all decent nations."

"I think you exaggerate," I replied. "Of course they feel that they were badly treated after the war. I am sure that a just settlement could be achieved peacefully—a settlement which would stabilize the Danubian situation . . ."

"Give the Devil your little finger and he will demand your arm," Krleža thundered. "No, until the Magyars get rid of their Junkers and the peasants rule in Budapest, your case is hopeless. Peasants always understand one another—they have so much in common. But aristocrats have no common bond save loot. In Jugoslavia we are all peasants—even the king. We can address him, as if he were one of ourselves, and he is not offended. But in your country every fifth-rate government clerk has a title . . ."

"What about the intellectuals, the writers, artists?" I demanded. "Surely they can understand each other?"

"Maybe," Krleža agreed. "But what is the use? We are merely voices crying in the desert. Have I not told you, my country consists of peasants? As peasants, we are blind and deaf to culture, to beauty—unless it is utilitarian. But is there a single country in Central Europe where men of the spirit have any say in the government? You need be hardly literate to become a politician."

I tried to change the subject.

"Don't you think Pan-Slavism can be revived?" I asked.

"The Slavs in Europe are like an incomplete circle," he replied. "Those in the north and south-west are separated by blocks of Teutons and Italians. In the east we have the Rumanians trying to maintain that they aren't Slavs at all—they are content to regard themselves as the bastards of the Romans. Russia is so preoccupied with her gigantic Bolshevik enterprise that she has no time for other people's problems. So the circle will never be complete—it will remain forever broken simply because we Slavs make no effort to close it. And that is lucky for Germany . . . and for Hungary. . . ."

I asked him about his literary work, but he was extremely reticent. Dante and Michelangelo were the two figures upon whom he had concentrated his mind, but he doubted if he would ever finish his plays he had planned. Like some other authors, he was least contented when most successful. He was contemptuous of his readers and despised his critics. I do not know how he could have been made happy.

When in April, 1941, Jugoslavia "found her soul" in resisting the German onslaught, I thought of Krleža, who I knew was still living in Zagreb. His bitter prophecy that Hungary would make common cause with the Axis had been fulfilled—but then, Croatia had done so, too. What did he think of Ante Pavelitch and his Ustasha thugs? Somehow I hoped that Jugoslavia's agony would purge and inspire him. But whatever Jugoslavian literature and art had achieved between the two wars, was destroyed in a fortnight of Nazi frightfulness and nobody knows when and how it will be resuscitated . . .

VI

Among the Slavs the Czech is the business man, the provider, the repository of common sense. That does not mean that

the Czech has not his dreams and moods—Dvořak and Smetana alone prove that he has—but because for almost two thousand years he has been in closest contact with the west and therefore with Germany, he has acquired a protective armour which his softer brothers in the south and east seem to lack. Think only of the legendary trek of the Czech Legion from the depths of Siberia which makes Xenophon's Anabasis look like a week-end excursion. That heroic venture certainly demanded courage; still more, common sense, grit and patience. The Czechs are the only Slav nation which has successfully built up and maintained an industrial civilization (the stability of the Russian experiment has yet to be proved). Patience is to me the most impressive Czech quality. Again and again they have been subjugated and for long periods submerged. But always they have known how to wait, how to work, and how to plan, for the hour of deliverance.

In the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy the Czechs were the backbone of the civil service. They seldom occupied high positions; they were content to be subordinates—secretaries, right-hand men, keepers of archives, expert advisers. They did the work and let others take the credit; some Excellency, offshoot of an impressive family tree, would put the results of their labours in his attaché case and thus satisfied set out for Parliament or Imperial Council. The Czechs were content to bide their time and store up experience which, in due course, went into the creation of their own republic.

Or look at their painstaking, tenacious work during the first world war. Thomas Garrigue Masaryk and Edouard Beneš had to fight step by step for the recognition of Czech claims. In the eyes of most responsible Allied statesmen, they were exiles and impractical dreamers. Wickham Steed told the story of a conversation he had with a Scotland Yard inspector in a harbour town; the guardian of law and order asked him if he knew anything about "this fellow Beneš" whom Scotland Yard locked up every time he came to England, making him miss his appointments, "just in case . . ." Steed told the inspector that the day might come when he would have to accept passports signed by "this fellow Beneš" as his country's Foreign Secretary! Like beavers those Czechs worked during the dark years, trying to build up a democratic state. They were perhaps the only people who were not disillusioned by Wilson and his Fourteen Points; and the naming of Prague's main railway

station after the American President was no mere empty tribute.

Their attitude towards the minorities—and, like every Slav country, they had within their borders considerable groups of other nationalities—was a strange mixture of narrow-minded chauvinism and tolerant understanding. They were magnanimous in the more important things and mean in the lesser, yet often more irritating. Intensely conscious of the *newness* of their state, they sometimes behaved somewhat like the new-rich. Yet the quality of their democracy was beyond doubt, in some respects more genuine and deeper-rooted—because more precarious—than the British.

I tested this democracy when I took my wife to Prague. I had passed through the city on several occasions and had several friends living there, but now that I had to show it to someone who was looking upon it with fresh eyes, I also saw it again, as it were, for the first time. We were staying at the Hôtel Sroubek in the Square of St. Wenceslas. My father had entertained Mr. Sroubek in Budapest, now Mr. Sroubek insisted that we should be his guests. He gave us his finest suite, all red velvet and solid comfort, with the taps in the bathroom so heavy that they might have been cast for all eternity; he himself with loving care designed our meals; he engaged a guide, a thin, voluble gentleman, for our exclusive enlightenment; he lent us his ostentatious Mercédès in which to drive about.

It was the car and its driver which gave me an insight into Czech democracy. Mr. Sroubek explained that we could use the Mercédès at any time except Sunday afternoon, when he was taking his family to the races. "I should be glad to invite you as well," he added, "but I have promised to take my chauffeur's wife and boy—and it would never do to disappoint them." We watched their departure from our balcony. The chauffeur was at the wheel and Mr. Sroubek was squeezed in between him and a boy of about sixteen, dressed in his Sunday best—the chauffeur's son. Mrs. Sroubek, with her little daughter and son, shared the back seat with the chauffeur's wife, a fair-haired dumpling of a woman with whom she chatted with the greatest animation. These two women—one the wife of a millionaire hotel-keeper and a vice-president of the International Hotel Association, the other the wife of one of his employees—behaved precisely as if they were social equals, as no doubt they felt themselves to be. I have visited country

houses in which the patriarchal custom of communal feeding was still preserved ; I have been in Protestant households where the servants came into the drawing-room for family prayers. But none of the servants would have ventured to address master or mistress " out of turn." I envied Mr. Sroubek, his chauffeur and their easy fellowship, when in my own country everybody stood upon their dignity and demanded to be addressed by —frequently absurd—titles.

We spent that Sunday afternoon exploring the Jewish cemetery —the oldest in Europe. There, under a blackened tombstone, rested Sarah Katz, who was buried about A.D. 600. There also stood the grave of the Wonder Rabbi Loew, the creator of Golem, its narrow ledge piled with stones deposited by pious Jewish pilgrims. I remembered Gustav Meyrink, the German-Czech writer, on whose shoulders the cloak of Poe and E. T. A. Hoffman had fallen (Hans Heinz Ewers with his fake *Alraune* and vampire stories was just a cheap imitator and a fit biographer of the pimp, Horst Wessel) and who had written a gripping, gloomy version of the Golem legend. The Golem story is similar to that of Frankenstein and his monster, but incomparably older. And Rabbi Loew seemed to live once more in the crooked streets of the Prague ghetto, the strange, half-buried synagogue, and Alchemists' Row. That row of tiny houses—each scarcely bigger than an average room—was built against the Hradsin wall. Some historians say that the Emperor Rudolph, who was deeply interested in the dark science of alchemy and the search for wondrous elixirs, lodged his alchemists in these houses so that when their alchemy fell short of his expectations he could have them dropped into the adjacent moat. The Imperial Councillors whom the enraged Czech noblemen threw from the windows of the Hradsin were more fortunate in their fate, for they escaped with shock and a few scratches. Yet no one bothered about the drowning of a few alchemists, whereas the eviction of the Imperial Councillors virtually started the madness of the Thirty Years War . . .

In the evening we sat in front of a small café and watched the people of Prague taking the summer air. Two soldiers passed, one of them tall and thin, the other very fat, with blue eyes and straw-coloured hair. The strangely assorted couple set me thinking of Jaroslav Hašek, the Czech Rabelais and his truly immortal " good soldier Schweik." How Hašek had hated the bank in which he was forced to work and how he must

have hated the Austrian army into which, like thousands of Czechs, he was conscripted! He was taken prisoner by the Russians and spent weary years in Siberia; not till he got back to a miraculously independent Czechoslovakia did he settle down to write his mighty epic, planned to consist of six long volumes, but cut short by his death at less than forty. Schweik was more than a modern Gargantua or Pantagruel; he was the symbol of all Czechs during the weary centuries of oppression. He was sly, utterly amoral, fond of the good things of the earth, intensely realistic, loyal to his own code, and—happy. He adopted the disguise of the moron to escape from the bully of circumstance. His adventures exposed the ramshackle rottenness of a declining empire. When I read Hašek's book for the first time I blushed for shame at his portrayal of Hungarian officers. He showed them as drunkards, gamblers, cowards, bullies. But when he came to write about the private soldier, he displayed a tender sympathy. They, too, were oppressed, downtrodden, victimized by the flunkeys in Hussar uniforms—and Schweik could understand them, whether they were Magyars from the great Plain, or Styrians from the gentle hills around Graz. Perhaps the picture was distorted, perhaps the colours were too garish—but Schweik must have been a godsend to many a Czech whose inborn inferiority complex survived the emancipation of independence. The Flemish have their "Tyl Eulenspiegel," whom de Coster made immortal. Tyl is a light-hearted rascal, a Puckish fellow who at the same time had fire and pathos enough to awaken his somewhat stolid countrymen in their life and death struggle against Habsburg tyranny, against the cold-blooded murderous fury of the Duke of Alba. Schweik, the Czech Eulenspiegel, is more mundane, more robust; he has his wits about him, even if they are small, his brain is practical and his patriotism is hidden under a deep layer of cynical passivity. I can well imagine thousands of Schweiks working in the Škoda factories, by tiny errors turning the German shells into duds and immobilizing the German tanks just when mobility becomes most urgent. That is why I think the Czechs have a much better chance of emerging virtually unscathed from their long and bitter ordeal than their more volatile and less resilient kinsmen, the Poles.

We took a taxi to Vinohrady where Karel Čapek lived, but he was abroad and I had to be content with talking to one of his friends, an editor of the Lidové Noviny, to which the author

of *R.U.R.* had been a contributor since 1917. We spoke first of Hašek, whose short stories had also been published in this influential Czech paper, and I told the Czech journalist how I felt about "Schweik." Then we discussed Čapek and his brother Joseph, the artist and co-author of the *Insects*.

"I am always amazed," the editor said, "to watch the workings of Karel's mind. As you say, Hašek stands with both legs firmly planted on good Czech earth; but Karel seems always to be reaching for the stars. Even his most human, everyday stories have a quality about them as if a giant were indulgently observing our self-occupied humanity as it crawls about the earth. Almost all his books are allegories, his plays dreams of worlds beyond human experience; yet his art is concerned with men and women, with flesh and blood. . . . He is like the pilot of an airplane looking down from a great height upon the expanse of field and mountain-slope. He looks farther and sees more than those on the ground—yet he knows that his eyes are human eyes and that he has to translate those wide vistas into language common to us all. . . . Sometimes I feel that Čapek is too great a writer for a small nation like the Czechs . . ."

"But surely you think then that his particular genius represents Czechoslovakia—though in a different plane, than, for instance, Hašek?" I asked.

"Oh yes, he represents the Czechs all right," the editor agreed. "But perhaps more those grim Hussites who fought for their faith and endured so much because they faced eternity and realized the vanity of human endeavour. . . . I warn you, we Czechs may look simple on the surface, but we have hidden depths . . . and we can be very complex . . ."

I realized the truth of these casual remarks when I went to see a Slovak poet, a priest who wore the white habit of the Cistercians. He served God in a small Slovakian village in the foothills of the Tatras. I might add that there was an absolute freedom of religion in the Republic, contrasting with some of its neighbours, and Catholic priests played a considerable and active part in political life. (Monsignore Hlinka and the Slovak Quisling Tiso were only two of these priest-politicians.)

I apologized for calling on him without an introduction, without even having made previously an appointment, but he waved my apologies aside with a smile.

"It is so characteristic of our humanity," the priest told me,

" that we usually feel the need to approach each other perhaps not in order to gain some advantage, but simply for companionship. And yet in most cases we keep back, faltering. And then, if in the end we decide to form a contact, we look for excuses, reasons, explanations which save us from feeling ashamed . . ."

That was a curious confession for a Slav to make, even if he were a priest and poet. I waited and he went on:

" How often, when I see a stranger in a café, or concert hall or in church, I feel that I ought to speak to him—yet cannot, because I can find no excuse for doing so. With the children it is easier. I ask them what are their favourite toys. There is a deeper, more supernatural significance than most of us imagine in the fact that Christ put before us the Child as the human ideal ! "

Smiling, he pushed a few newspaper cuttings towards me.

" Recently some of my poems were translated into Magyar and German. A kind reviewer seemed to attribute whatever merit these verses contain to a certain child-like quality in their author. Perhaps he was right. The old ladies of the convent or the white-haired professors in the Protestant college at Prague, which I visit occasionally, say much the same. In every respect I try to live as simply as possible. I am all passivity; a will stronger than my own shapes my plans, as it does that of a child—and in the main, I feel it is the heavenly will. . . . This is perhaps the only psychological explanation of kindness. ' Thy will be done . . .' Let the will of the suffering be done, the will of the beggar's hand, the will of life. A man such as I could never be a leader . . ."

I knew that thousands of young Slovak students had chosen him for their spiritual leader though he had steadfastly refused to dabble in politics.

Before I left he told me:

" I have discovered that to help someone who is suffering greatly, who has lost his father or his faith or is the victim of an incurable disease—words are useless . . . sometimes even despicable. The only salve is the implied sympathy of kinship. This feeling of kinship I am able to suggest to people. That is my whole secret. Whenever I get into trouble, when I am humiliated, I search my soul—to see if I have been vainglorious, if I have been lacking in humility towards life and suffering. My most revered tutor is Death; he prunes my failings, my vanity, my hardness of heart, my sensuality, like a terrible

gardener. I have suffered through much of my youth—and I am still young. But I think the Slavs should create a unity of understanding and kindness instead of one of hate and mistrust . . . Alas, we are very far from it . . ."

I cannot give you the name of this good man; he is one of those who to-day leads the spiritual, but stubborn, opposition to the Nazis in Czechoslovakia. His great master, Death, is dogging his heels all the time. But perhaps his great dream of the Slavs building a unity of love and trust will come true one day.

VII

Prague and Belgrade, Zagreb and Dubrovnik are wrapped in a fog of smoke and blood. The Czechs do not take readily to guerilla warfare; they prefer to stay at their posts and inflict the greatest possible harm on the oppressor where he expects it least. The Croats have shouldered themselves with a government of assassins. The Rumanians are the most bewildered people in the Balkans; they do not want to fight and they have little idea what they are fighting for. But the Bulgarians—I imagine that the impressive and sinister silence which I felt during my brief visit to Sofia must have thickened behind the lovely setting of rivers, mountains, valleys and peace-loving people. When I was there diplomats were already engaged in mad and apparently purposeless pursuits—like those of the Keystone Cops in ancient two-reelers—meeting at green tables, smoking huge cigars and signing documents which no one took seriously. In the cafés, restaurants and flats of the Bulgarian capital anxious men and women were perpetually listening for some sign of what was going on around them. Smart, tough-looking officers strolled about, in the best Ruritanian tradition. All the girls whom I met had big, expectant eyes—as they promenaded the Boulevard Tsar Osvoboditel they seemed on the *qui vive* for something exciting to happen. The churches with their onion-shaped cupolas and the Moslem mosques were symbols of unreality; they suggested the survival of old aristocrats in a world which vehemently disapproved of churches and aristocrats alike. In the Valley of Roses—probably the sweetest-smelling place among all the bad odours of the Balkans—girls sang at their work, while the men were probably thinking of the Gumurdjina, the strip of territory by the acquisition of which the Greeks cut off Bulgaria from the Ægean. (Hitler

restored it to them, but the feeling of possession must be a very uneasy one.) The Danube flowed by majestically, the fishermen on her banks, staring at the opposite side where Dobruja lay—that piece of earth which had cost more Balkan blood than any other territory. To the east of the country there was the simple loveliness of Varna; but across the Black Sea squat oil tankers were ploughing their way towards Sulina, Budapest, and so to the Third Reich, already gathering stores for the coming *Blitzkrieg*. A little to the south the Turkish frontier lay; behind it, Kemal's reborn nation was enjoying springtime in a shamelessly lazy, Oriental mood. But the Bulgarians felt doubtful about the Turks whose appetite had been whetted by those small wars that followed the great one. And to the west the Macedonians were making careful preparations for cutting someone's throat, though they had not yet quite decided whose throat it should be. Sometimes they paused from cleaning their rifles or sharpening their bayonets to discuss some abstract point of brigand ethics.

When I paid my first call at a Bulgarian home—it was the flat of a rather left-wing playwright—his wife offered me a small portion of syrup-sweet strawberries garnished with preserved melon-rind, a custom known as the "slatko." "*I hope you become sweet!*" she said, in German. By accepting the sweetmeat I became an honoured guest whose every wish must be fulfilled. To have refused it would have been regarded as a mortal insult. But the traditional wish that accompanied it made me wonder whether amid so much sourness and bitterness south of Belgrade the attainment of sweetness of spirit was not rather a vain hope. No doubt an atmosphere of unreality hovered over these countries. Was it the haze of the coming war, or just the usual false glamour of the Balkans? Everything was indefinite, vague; ideas, principles and facts seemed to lose their outline. Chaos has never yielded to order—at least not in the brains.

I confess that I was prepared to like Bulgaria after my first cup of Bulgarian coffee. It was so thick that the spoon stood almost upright in it. It was also very hot. I was instructed to sip it noisily if I wished to show my appreciation of it. The coffee made me condone the fact that the three basic elements of Bulgarian cooking are mutton, paprika and tomato. The proportions are varied, but in no case may one of these three elements be left out of any national dish, except, of course, the *taratora*

soup, which consists of cold milk, gherkin and walnuts, the most effective prelude to nightmares I have ever discovered.

Bulgaria at the time of my visit was one of the centres of the Balkan "muddle." The people were simple, righteous and realistic. They believed—perhaps with reason—that they had good cause to feel angry with every one of their neighbours and to mistrust all Great Powers. More than anything they wanted peace, yet their problems were as contradictory and complicated as a jigsaw puzzle devised by a madman. Everywhere I went I encountered a strong tradition of Anglophilia; but I also found the conviction that in the event of a war Britain would use the Turks to attack Bulgaria and thereby create a Balkan front against Germany. They respected the French, but hated the French-created Little Entente which they supposed to be directed against them just as much as against Hungary. They admired German efficiency, but resented the brutal self-sufficiency of the Hun. Hitler had sent them his agents, swarming with aggressive proposals and equally aggressive propaganda. They loved Italian culture and music, adored their serenely beautiful queen who was Italian—but even Ciano's glittering uniforms could not make them trust Italian diplomacy. . . .

According to all the Bulgarians with whom I talked, theirs was the worst treated of all nations in the world. The Second Balkan War and the bigger conflagration of 1914–18 both left them frustrated and bitter. According to the Sofia statisticians, more than a million and a half Bulgarians were living under foreign rule, not counting the Macedonians whom Jugoslavia claimed and who, being the most contrary people in the world, would not belong to anywhere. Their main grievance was concentrated on the Dobruja—which Hitler was offering them —a piece of land which has had many rulers and found peace under none.

After 1918, Bulgaria made attempts to come to an understanding with her neighbours, but without much success. She would not enter into any pact which meant the renunciation of her territorial claims. Her political life has been always troubled and violent. Stambulinsky was an able and progressive peasant dictator who leaned towards Communism while at the same time following a strongly pro-Jugoslav policy. But when he fell his successors decided to put home affairs first and let foreign policy slide. They had a difficult time of it. Communist uprisings disturbed the work of reconstruction. Anarchists and

Macedonian terrorists gave the country hell. One of their bombs shattered the Sveta Nedelia, the loveliest church in the capital.

Hitler had just marched into Prague when I was in Sofia and there was a marked uneasiness among the people to whom I talked. Politics—not only home politics, but the affairs of the whole world—had invaded the open air restaurants, crept into the drawing-rooms and permeated the minds of all young people. Girls and matrons who should have been discussing love, art, or the latest mode in hats, were now speculating about the relations of Britain and Italy, the chances of an immediate war or its postponement for two or three years. No one was prepared to plan for the future.

I tried to discover the spirit of Bulgaria, the characteristic genius of a thrifty and realistic people, so often swept into violent action by a world in which they seemed to be strangers. The elms and chestnuts along the streets were a soft green in the gentle shy spring. Attractive old houses stood side by side with streamlined blocks of flats. The small restaurants were crowded with people listening to gipsies who played old Slav songs—plaintive melodies of a monotonous rhythm. In the night-clubs Hungarian fan dancers were going through their routine and Macedonian dance hostesses were trying to make you buy bad German champagne. At the Grand Hôtel Bulgarie, the Ritz of Sofia, almost everybody looked like a spy, and practically nobody was one.

I visited the churches. The Sveta Nedelia had been patched up; but the dim interior seemed haunted by the memory of the three hundred people killed by terrorists' bombs. The Sveta Sofia, with its eight centuries of traditional worship . . . the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, built in grateful commemoration for the liberation of Bulgaria from the Turkish yoke by Tsar Alexander in 1878 . . . the St. Nikola with its gilded domes, carved windows and dark, dim ikons . . . They all demonstrated the Bulgarians' belief in an angry, personal God Who had little patience with mankind.

I listened to the Bulgars' music: the music of the *kaval*, a kind of clarinet, of the *gaida*, the Bulgarian equivalent of the bagpipes, and of the *gadul*, a strange modification of the violin. I saw the *mandra*, or the fire dance, on St. Constantine's day; a terrifying spectacle, suggestive of voodoo ceremonies.

I spoke to their artists and writers—and all the varied impres-

sions I received fused into the conviction that the Bulgarians were fated to become the victims of history, whether by their own action or through circumstances beyond their control. I think it was in an American book that I read the expression: "a born murderee." It seemed to fit Bulgaria perfectly.

VIII

The territory which Rumania occupied between the two world wars was anything but homogenous. It was divided from north to south and from east to west by the mountain-chain of the Carpathians. On either side of the mountains language and literature was different; and the part that landscape plays in the spiritual attitude of a European country has been nowhere more prominent than in Rumania. On the eastern and southern slopes of the Carpathians and on the plains into which they merge the two former Rumanian principalities were stretched out: Moldavia in the east, Wallachia in the south. The two had been united in a single kingdom by the events of the late nineteenth century, but the spiritual face of these two provinces always showed marked differences, as Rumanian writers have themselves admitted. Wallachia was always closer to the Balkans and Byzantium. This final appendix of the Russian steppes was an open gate for every foreign ideology. It was not a mere accident that in the eighteenth century the Greek and Turkish elements first took roots in Bucharest; and that a hundred years later the same city became the centre of a quickly spreading *gallomania*, a European veneer which has been criticized so persistently by all who are concerned for the survival of national culture in Central and Eastern Europe.

Moldavia is quite different; its urban life is limited, its peasantry more prosperous, talking a less hybrid language; its landlords more patriarchal. Here the rhythm of life is slower and the historical traditions deeper. The cosmos of Russia is closer and "the melancholy of pale Slavs," as a Hungarian poet puts it, blends with Oriental love of comfort and passive contemplation. Moldavia had been organized into a state by the *voivodes*, who left North-Eastern Hungary in the thirteenth century, mostly on the model of Magyar medieval feudalism. Yet this piece of earth is permeated by a mystical national feeling, completely Rumanian; hallowed by traditions; domin-

ated by its national past. Here, in the seventeenth century, Archbishop Dosoftei translated into Rumanian the psalms of David; here a hundred years afterwards Juon Nekultse related his jovial historical anecdotes; here, in the middle of the nineteenth century, was born Mihail Eminescu, the most representative figure of modern Rumanian literature.

Eminescu crystallizes the destiny of Rumanian intellectuals. His brilliant talent found the narrow limits of the Moldavian countryside insufficient, irksome. In his childhood he often roamed the primeval forests of the Carpathians, where he fell in love with mountain and woodland, became enamoured with the shepherd's life, the most typical of Rumanian occupations. But he soon left this romantic district. His parents sent him to Cernauti—Austrian in those days—to study. He became a pupil of Aron Pumnul, a renowned Rumanian pedagogue who had left Transylvania, the embattled country between Hungary and "Old" Rumania. The young student felt that if ever he became a writer, he must speak to all the Rumanians. And in his teacher's small library he mastered all that Rumanian literature had produced—a literature which was scarcely beginning to become articulate. It was difficult to find a publisher for one's books; still more difficult to find a public. Young Eminescu was fortunate that his tutor had made a careful collection of his country's budding authors and that he was able to read his contemporaries.

But quiet study was broken by the appearance in Cernauti of a company of itinerant players. Young Eminescu became stage-struck. He left school and joined the company. He travelled over Transylvania and spent some time in the small town of Balazsfalva which was the centre of Rumanian culture outside the "old country." His companions were poor students and simple labourers. Later he became the prompter of another touring company which ended up in Bucharest. He was barely nineteen, but knew all the provinces in which Rumanians lived. In tumbledown barns, wearing ragged clothes, he was reading Shakespeare, Heine and Schiller. He had a devouring passion for culture. Despite his failure in Balazsfalva to pass his examination in Greek, he wrote the finest Sapphic verses in his own language. Somehow or other he graduated from the secondary school and managed to get to Vienna and Berlin where, although his university attendance was rather spasmodic, he read with passionate intensity and acquired an almost

encyclopædic culture. He became more and more interested in philosophy, his idols being Kant, Schopenhauer and Hegel. In Rumania his reputation as a thinker became so great that his friend and patron, Titus Majorescu, offered him a chair at Bucharest University—waiving his lack of academic qualifications. But Eminescu did not regard himself good enough for such a high educational honour. When he returned to Rumania he became a librarian, then a school inspector, and finally a hack journalist. At the age of thirty-three he fell a victim to an incurable disease which slowly disintegrated his brain. He spent some years in the Austrian asylum at Döbling, sought to regain his health in Venice and among his beloved Moldavian mountains—but in vain. The " Fourth Letter," a long rambling poem, ended :

" Broken the old violin and its master mad . . ."

He died in a Bucharest asylum in 1889. Some say he was murdered by one of the inmates.

His was a typical Rumanian life—romantic, lonely. His essential greatness cannot be appreciated without knowing the main facts of his life and, through them, the spirit of Rumania. He set an outstanding example to his people by the culture he acquired under such difficult circumstances. The two most potent influences in the nineteenth-century renaissance of Rumanian literary life were French and German. Although a strong upholder of the traditions of his own nation, Eminescu had a deep regard for the German spiritual atmosphere in which for a time he had lived. At the same time he could look beyond the cultural frontiers of Austria and find in Lamartine, Victor Hugo and de Musset as much spiritual and emotional content as in Heine or Lenau. In his work he struck an ideal balance between the Teuton and the Gallic ideologies.

His work is divided into two main parts. The first includes the writings that he had published in his lifetime. These are not numerous. He left behind him little more than a hundred completely finished poems, one or two lyrical novels and short stories, some political articles and essays. But behind all this is the second part of his *œuvre*—many volumes of manuscripts now in the keeping of the Rumanian Academy, pages and pages of poetry and prose feverishly scribbled, often undecipherable, all written under the shadow of madness. Sketches of dramas in which the raving heroes mirror the tortured moments of

the author, terrified by the creeping doom of lunacy: epic works in which he has endeavoured to cover the history of mankind; poems, again and again revised even as many as twenty times only to be abandoned in despair. It is strange that no Rumanian critic has undertaken to edit this material, surely capable of yielding several volumes worthy of publication. If Rumanian literature ever needs a new source of inspiration, there it is hidden in the dusty tomes of a mad genius. . . .

IX

Rumania was constantly dogged by the bad luck of having allies who despised her and enemies who did not bother to understand her. In spite of the grandiloquent claims that she was a country with a history stretching back to the Romans, Rumania had no real historical heritage. The shepherds and woodcutters, the peasants and even the landed gentry, the bojars, were seldom interested in politics. In no other country had political life been so largely the privilege of crooks and hot-heads. A series of assassinations, plots and counter-plots, of musical comedy revolutions and financial corruption, had turned the country into a laughing-stock and a whipping-boy at the same time. King Carol, a great-grandson of Queen Victoria, was a charming fellow; he made a picturesque king but never a leader in his country. Young Michael, twice King and twice Crown Prince, could not escape the bad influence of his father's unhappy marriage. To-day, a hostage of the Nazis, he must be reflecting bitterly upon the hard fate of kings. Rumania's political leaders of the last twenty years have mostly come to a sticky end. Duca, Professor Cristescu—first leader of the Iron Guards—and Armand Calinescu, the "Rumanian Dollfuss,"—these were but three outstanding victims of political intrigue. Titulescu, who for so many years ably represented Rumania's interests abroad, did not dare to return to his country after his fall. As Rumanian politicians—with some notable exceptions—were bound to have a short and feverish life after they attained power, no one could really grudge them if they tried to make the most profitable use of their brief terms of office. The *leu* was a currency of which you had to amass many millions before the amount became worth turning into dollars or pounds. Graft was rampant, bribery the order of the day. As the higher-ups —again with some exceptions—helped themselves with both

hands, the exchequer was usually empty. Civil servants were miserably paid and their pay was always in arrears. No wonder they should try to make an "honest living" in various ways "on the side." On the railways—apart from the international lines—a bargain could be struck with the ticket-collector by paying him about one-third of the fare, having ridden without a ticket. As you often had to pay the bribe even when you had taken a ticket and it was in order, it was not surprising that the more astute citizens should adopt the practice of travelling without one. The Siguranza, the political police, was one of the most corrupt in history and had a regular price list for blackmail. Post-masters and tax collectors, teachers and building inspectors, all expected their "squeeze." Indeed, the only certifiable crime in Rumania seemed to be poverty.

"The Rumanians are thankful for that bit of Black Sea which they border on; for the Black Sea is the only neighbour who hasn't a grouse against them," wrote Count Ferdinand Czernin in his "Europe, Going, Going, Gone!" In straight novels and thrillers Rumanians were usually described as "greasy" and "shifty-eyed." The Rumanian officer rouged his cheeks and wore corsets. In at least ten spy stories that I have read the villain (or rather one of the minor villains, for the chief villain's part was considered too good for him) was a Rumanian. In fact, few foreigners had a good word for the Rumanian—and at least half of these were English journalists who at one time or other had enjoyed King Carol's lavish hospitality.

A clue to this antipathy might be found, perhaps, in the following story, told me by a Swiss friend. His uncle, a banker who had floated many international loans, went to Rumania on business and was entertained at dinner by the president and board of the largest Rumanian bank. The food was excellent, the wines superb, the gipsies' music divine. The Swiss banker was sitting on the right of the President, and at his other side was the First Vice-President—a tall, bearded, benign gentleman who spoke the four main European languages, each with an equally atrocious accent. When the dinner was over, the guest of honour felt for his watch. It was gone. Naturally he was very much upset and, after some hesitation, he told the President what had happened.

The President looked extremely unhappy. Then, after a moment's reflection he hurried away to return in a few minutes with the watch.

"I remembered that at dinner you sat next to our Vice-President," he explained.

"You mean," stammered his Swiss guest. "You mean that——"

"Hush!" The President raised his finger to his lips. "He doesn't know yet . . ."

Of course this is a wicked story, and probably invention. Yet the mere fact that it is told about Rumanians shows what their reputation is like. Whenever they went abroad they did little to improve it. Perhaps you remember the scandalous, amusing and equally unauthentic story of King Carol's masseur at King George the Fifth's funeral. There are many such stories —true or imaginary—and their cumulative effect is damning.

On a boat cruising along the Dalmatian shores we sat at the same table with a Rumanian couple. The man was swarthy, dressed in what an English music-hall comedian would call "natty gent's suiting"; the woman was unrecognizable under several coats of paint. My wife asked for tea instead of coffee, at breakfast. The next morning the Rumanians also asked for tea, though they loathed the stuff; they had come to the conclusion that it was more "fashionable."

X

To-day the Slavs, as so often in their history, are again divided. Russia, the greatest Slav country, is at war with Hitler. Poland, Czechoslovakia and Jugoslavia are under the invader's heel; Bulgaria and Rumania have joined the Nazis. Yet the Slavs still strive "to fuse and unite"; they still cry for "a distant brother, a helping hand, a presence in the night." Their longing may be fulfilled and the circle completed at last—if they sink their ancient grievances and resolve to become good Europeans.

Nine

> By courage I mean the desire whereby every man strives to preserve his own being in accordance solely with the dictates of reason.
>
> SPINOZA

> *That same man, that runnith awaie,*
> Maie again fight an other daie.
>
> ERASMUS

. . . But from the gruesome heaps of ruins
There rises now a bitter call:
"Look and remember what has happened,
How they showed mercy towards us all!"
That cry be heard by all the Germans
From those who are oppressed by them!
The airmen who are full of mercy,
They, they have bombed our Rotterdam!

ANONYMOUS POEM (*composed in the Summer of* 1941 *in Holland*)

DUTCH COURAGE

I

"YES, WE are fat and happy," said Mynheer van Balluseck. "We like big black cigars, *bols* and *rijstafel*. They say that Amsterdam is the cleanest city in Europe—and the dullest. But you know"—and he took one of his big black cigars from his lips—"sometimes I wonder, . . ."

We were sitting on the terrace of Schiphol, Amsterdam's famous airport, and had just finished lunch at which we were the guests of the K.L.M., the Dutch passenger airline. Outside on the tarmac, the Amsterdam-Batavia 'plane was taking off on the first lap of its world-spanning journey, and a huge silver 'plane was taxi-ing slowly into position to carry us on a short flight over Holland. All about us seemed to be solid comfort, economic security. Mynheer van Balluseck was the editor of the *Algemeene Handelsblad*, one of the most successful and highly respected Dutch newspapers. He had travelled and read widely and was a bit of a philosopher. But our discussion was broken off by a summons to the silver 'plane. For half an hour we swept over the flat countryside—over canals, windmills, dykes—and then the silvery pattern of the sea opened below us, shining in the sun, disturbed only by our shadow. When we landed, motor boats were waiting to take us back to the city and to tea with the Amsterdam journalists at their club. It was not until five days later, walking among the tents and wooden huts of Voegelenzang where twelve thousand boy scouts were assembled for their last peace-time Jamboree, that I was able to continue my talk with Mynheer van Balluseck.

"You said," I reminded him, "that sometimes you were perplexed by the character of your people. Why? I hope you are not going to tell me that the Dutch are not what they seem. That would be indeed a blow."

"But I am afraid it is so," the editor replied. "How and why, I cannot explain. But if it were not so, how explain Rembrandt, Erasmus, Spinoza, Van Gogh? What was their dominant quality? Courage! Yet in English, Dutch courage is a term of contempt, is it not? Rembrandt, who painted the 'Night Watch' in the manner he thought truest to his art, did not care whether the good burghers threw it back at him; did not care that his picture ended up—at least during his life-time—in a cheap inn. Erasmus did not hesitate to speak his mind to crowned heads, to laugh at mock majesty, and ridicule sham learning. Think of Spinoza, grinding his lenses at The Hague, refusing the chair at the University of Heidelberg, dying at forty-five because he preferred to go on working in a garret rather than save his life by taking a trip to sunny Italy. You know how Van Gogh, coming upon a pregnant woman in the street whose lover had left her, took her into his house and married her—afterwards relating the incident to his brother as if it were the simplest and most natural action in the world . . ."

"Yes, but these were all exceptional individuals," I objected, not too tactfully. "There are many qualities for which I admire and respect your countrymen—but I confess that courage is not one of them, nor boldness in the field of spiritual exploration. As it seems to me, the Dutch are honest and wholesome; they have a sort of sturdy individualism; they have created a civilization which is urbane in the best sense of the word—but . . . how long has it been since you fought a war?"

"You may be right," said van Balluseck. "But I think the qualities which you claim the Dutch lack, are only hidden. That they are not evident, I admit—but this may be due to the fact that for more than fifty years we have been ruled by women. Our Queen is a wonderful woman, even finer in adversity or at a crisis than when the times are normal. But we have no Crown Prince—only a Princess. Some of us are beginning to fear that there will be no male heir to the throne. . . . I wish sometimes that some great calamity would befall our people so that we might be shaken from our complacency, our easy-going absorption in the present . . ."

And now I hear that the Nazis have arrested van Balluseck

and put him in a concentration camp because he refused to "co-operate." If any proof were needed of the reality of Dutch courage, the past years have afforded it. Of all the oppressed nations in Europe, it is the Dutch who are fighting the New Order with the greatest dignity and contempt for death and humiliation.

II

Along the *grachten* the houses are narrow and tall. The tiny mirrors set outside the windows are signs of the queer Dutch habit of hiding their curiosity; they were placed in such a way that they can watch the life of the streets without being seen themselves. Beneath the eaves there are sturdy hooks by means of which furniture can be moved through the windows, the staircases being too narrow. I remember my struggle with two medium-sized suit-cases on a narrow spiral blocked halfway to the first landing by a bicycle hanging just above my head suspended on hooks. That was when I took my wife to Amsterdam for the first time. We stayed in the Beethovenstraat and paid two guilders a day for bed and breakfast. The room was spotlessly clean, breakfast so ample that it also did for lunch. We explored the city. The houses in the new section have been built exactly in the same style as the old, mellow brick buildings—except for a school which was almost entirely glass and in which the classes could always follow the sun. In a narrow, tall house on the Damrak I talked to a soft-voiced gentleman who had created a large publishing firm for the German authors driven out by the Nazis. He related that he was engaged in smuggling out a talented playwright from Germany whom Hitler's Gestapo had mixed up with a namesake, a well-known Communist. The only uneasiness I noticed in Holland was among the refugees and those connected with them. Most of the Germans were really to be pitied; they had left their country because they disagreed with its political system, or because the system had expelled them; but they still believed Germany to be the greatest country in the world. As in France, in Holland they were called the "*Bei Uns Leute*"—the "With Us" people, because "with us" was their invariable opening gambit: "With us, in Germany, everything is better . . . bigger . . . more efficient . . ."

In Voegelenzang we spent the day walking in the fair-sized city of tents which had sprung up overnight. The Dutch

scouts were hosts to thirty-two nations, and in the evenings there gathered round the camp fires Turkish and Scottish boys, Swedes and Siamese, Hungarians and Poles.

As a sort of journalistic stunt I made a round of the different national camps, and asked a boy of each group how he would solve the problems of the world. The answers, though not very constructive, were naïvely refreshing. A Dutch boy said something which rather struck me as a characteristic utterance from a placid Hollander.

" I would permit everybody to return to his own country if he wished," he said. " Everybody would be allowed to speak, write and think in the language he loves best. Happiness costs little ; but the people of the world seem to prefer to pay heavily for their own misery . . ."

We lived in Haarlem to be near the camp. The old little town, with its art galleries and churches, was a dangerous place for pedestrians. Cyclists rushed in droves along the street, oblivious of any obstruction smaller than a lorry or a tram. We stayed at a small boarding house kept by a Russian lady who had married a Dutchman ; when he died she tried to go back to Russia, but found that " the place had changed." Her father had been a minor court official, and she told us stories about the glory of the Tsarist court. She also fed us well. Indeed, everybody seemed intent on feeding us well. One night we went into a restaurant called Brinkman, and ordered an *hors d'œuvre* and a Holstein steak. A separate table had to be cleared to make room for the *hors d'œuvre* and the steak, served with five different vegetables, including potatoes prepared in three different ways, must have weighed at least a pound. We tackled both courses courageously, but had to give up the unequal struggle half-way through. The waiter, a tall, fat fellow with a rubicund face, watched our exertions with a paternal eye. When I asked him to take away the remains of the steak, he patted my shoulder as much as to say : " I am sure you did your best, and no one can do more . . . ! " He even refused a tip, so convinced was he that we had not had value for our money.

Madelon Lulofs, daughter of a former Governor of Sumatra, and one of Holland's few internationally successful modern writers, took us to Noordwijk, the most distinguished Dutch coastal resort. Scheveningen has always been a show-place, monopolized by foreign visitors, but the well-to-do Dutch

families go to Noordwijk. We found it utterly different from other seaside towns. There were no gardens, and the only flowers we saw were indoors. Nor was there any shade anywhere except beneath canvas awnings or in the *cabanas*. An endless stretch of sand, villas scattered haphazard amid the dry grass of the dunes and beyond the sand of the North Sea. It seemed to me it needed courage to face this flat and monotonous, treeless expanse of sand and sea, but the people who lived in the villas, or in the luxury hotels along the main promenade did not seem to be intimidated by it. Sand and sea, after all, are a familiar sight for the Dutchman.

Noordwijk was the only place in Holland where I saw luxury and elegance combined. But it was a homely sort of luxury and elegance, and the outstanding event in the life of the Huis ter Duin, the smartest hotel, was the midweek children's ball.

One morning we saw a tall, fair-haired young man get into a car in front of the Mayor's house. He often spent part of the summer as the Mayor's guest, we were told. There was a strangely vacant look in his eyes as he drove away. Not until the evening did we learn—what he already knew—that his father had been killed in a mountaineering accident. He had been the Crown Prince Leopold. Now he was King of the Belgians. Tragedy had just overtaken him. I wondered if he had any premonition of the yet grimmer tragedy that loomed ahead.

III

I loved Holland because it is a country of short distances, concentrated beauty. It is easy to understand why The Hague was the seat of Government, in which all good Dutchmen long to live, although Amsterdam is the largest city. Rotterdam and Utrecht are smaller than sprawling Amsterdam, yet I found their streets just as metropolitan, their traffic just as lively as those of Amsterdam, and their culture no less significant. And it is so easy to get about in Holland—the whole country seems to be linked by a chain of suburbs, but without any of the obnoxious qualities that this term implies in England. A man may hold a job in Rotterdam and live at The Hague, live in Amsterdam, and have his dentist at The Hague, his tailor or hairdresser in Utrecht. I met a Dutch lady who lived in Breda and went every fortnight to Brussels to have her "perm" renewed and order the latest fashions.

The low-pitched Town Hall at Hilversum—a building which has been the centre of violent disputes—symbolizes to me the old and new Holland, the blending of past and present. It was built in the style of the German "*neue Sachlichkeit.*" It is puritanical in its simplicity, yet romantic in its beauty. Flowers are massed in the windows; an artificial lake, with water lilies drifting on its quiet surface, surrounds it. It suggests a quiet old chalet rather than a prosaic official building in which new taxes are created and the appointment of market inspectors is decided.

As for The Hague, it is a perfect example of utilitarianism made beautiful. It was also the most international city in Holland. Before the war there were many shops with French signs (in the other Dutch cities German was the second dominant language), and there was a state-subsidized French opera house. In the Witte Club everybody who "counted" drank their bitters. The club was founded in 1802, and immediately became Holland's unofficial parliament. The parliament house, on the other hand, with its tiny chamber, suggests the legislative assembly of Ruritania; yet it is from here that the fate of a far-flung empire, immensely rich and colourful, has been directed. In the *Huis ten Bosch* the first disarmament conference was held; on the woody road to Scheveningen you may see Andrew Carnegie's vast Palace of Peace—a symbol of man's eternally frustrated desire to conduct his affairs in the light of reason and understanding.

I talked to many Dutchmen—politicians, journalists and the "men-in-the-street"—with a view to discovering their attitude towards the problems of Europe. Almost all of them insisted that strict neutrality was the only policy their country could follow. Refugees had brought from Germany their tales of horror and suffering, but the capacity of pity had been exhausted by sheer repetition.

The Dutch did not believe that Germany would attack them because in the last war Holland—like Switzerland and Spain—was a convenient base of espionage. They argued that a Holland run by the Dutch would be a better supply base for Germany than a country they would be compelled to hold down by force. The number of Nazi sympathizers was not large, but some were in key positions. On the whole, I found the typical Dutchman slightly irritated by the folly of both the totalitarian and democratic states. They considered all the strutting, all the cheek

and counter-check, appeasement and bluff, somewhat childish. They felt that if instead of quarrelling among themselves everybody would get on with their legitimate business, selling and buying, building and planning, exploiting the vast resources of nature, the world might be a decent place. A long time had elapsed since the Dutch fought a war. I was shown a cartoon of 1915 which depicted a big Dutchman perched on an immense tap. The caption said: "Holland's Defence."

"The tap is still there," the Dutchman assured me. "And we shan't hesitate to turn it on if Germany tries an invasion."

Unfortunately in 1940 the turning-on of the tap proved to be insufficient against Nazi cunning and cruelty.

IV

"Calm, sober and jovial," the three adjectives most frequently used to describe Dutchmen, but the description is rather deceptive. Of this calmness and sobriety there are some strange manifestations. We walked one evening in the streets of Rotterdam, close to the docks, where sailors of all races and nations spend their hard-earned wages. Here were the haunts of the prostitutes; almost every second house was a drinking dive, with music and red lights. There were no street-walkers; each woman had her room in a semi-basement with a few steps leading down to it. We glanced into one or two of these rooms through their transparent curtains. Under the soft glow of a lamp, the lady who offered her charms for sale sat demurely at her table, sewing or reading. Everything was neat, clean and—yes, homely; flowers on the plush table cover, pictures on the walls, carpet-covered sofa. It might have been a charming scene of domesticity had the ladies not been so expectantly alone and so flimsily dressed. Prostitution in Holland—at least in those Rotterdam streets—was calm and sober, indeed . . . almost dignified.

Yet all through the centuries there have been rebels against this equanimity. Guiccardini, the famous Florentine historian of the sixteenth century, maintained that the Dutch were of an even temper, kind-hearted, practical and able to curb their desires. But in the same century lived Anna Bojns, the poetess, a rebel—perhaps the first in Europe—against the intellectual bondage of woman. Coornhert, the humanist, Corneliszoon, the dramatist and poet, shared with the great Erasmus the fight

of the rebellious spirit against the last vestiges of the Middle Ages. Three centuries later Taine, the great French essayist, explained how the Dutch character was a result of the Dutch climate. " The Netherlander," he wrote, " lives in a humid and equitable climate which lulls the nerves to rest, dulls the winged revolt of the soul, flattens the sharpness of passions and tends to make a man mildly sensuous and well-tempered." Yet in the same century Couperus, Heijermans, Potgieter, Van Eeden —in literature—Van Gogh, Israels, Jongkind and Mesdag—in art—revolting against this pacific climate, sought ways and means to express ideas and emotions which were not by any means " well-tempered " and decidedly too " sensuous."

Who could speak of calmness and sobriety in connection with Rembrandt ? The spiritual grandeur of the greatest Dutch artist (to me the greatest of all painters) was in flagrant contradiction to the general conception of the Dutch character. And, nearer to our time, belonging closely to the Europe of which I write this epitaph, Vincent van Gogh is another striking example of Dutch courage and intellectual daring.

Van Gogh was the personification of extreme individualism. He defied convention, despised the manners of social life. Not because he wanted to be conspicuous or acquire a cheap notoriety —his life was all within his mind, his suffering and struggle was far too private to be twisted into comedy for the world's benefit. All the confusion and eccentricity that were apparent in his views and way of life were just as much part of his genius as his way of handling the brush. He was ruled by his heart and his instincts. He knew no self-discipline.

As a young man he worked in an art dealer's shop. But he was the oddest art dealer in the world. He harangued his employer on the sacrilege of selling works of art for profit. Of course he was fired. Then he decided to enter the Church. For a time he was a clergyman in England and later he became a priest in a small Belgian mining town while he prepared for missionary work. But the call of art was irresistible, and after a short spell at The Hague in the studio of Mauve, the famous Dutch landscape painter, he made his final decision to be an artist. His restless blood drove him from Holland to Belgium, from Belgium to Paris and then to the South of France, where the sky was a clearer blue and the colours of the soil more dazzling and his own palette, too, burned with an intenser fire. Here, struck down by illness, he went through a grave crisis,

alike physical and spiritual. He was tortured by an ever-growing excitement. There were periodical fits of insanity and the intervals of sanity were filled with the gnawing fear of their return. When he was thirty-seven he put a bullet through his head.

His art is filled with the longing for a form of spiritual expression that impressionism, the ruling art movement of his period could not satisfy. He was closest to Millet, the painter of the proletariat, and he copied some of Millet's pictures—or rather transposed them into his own style. In the depths of his tortured and restless soul there was both pity and the fiery desire to bring happiness to men and women. He was certainly a misfit in his own country, where people on the whole were hard-headed and practical, deeming art, literature and other adventures of the spirit as belonging to the holidays of life. But from time to time a genius sprang from the Dutch soil typifying the courage that lies dormant in the Dutch character except in the hour of national tribulation.

V

That hour came suddenly, but not unexpectedly. False alarms of a German attack abounded during the first seven months of the war; and almost every time the Dutch said, a little tremulously: "Well, not to-day . . . but perhaps next week."

One of the most moving documents of the war is a short book written by a twelve-year-old Dutch boy. Dirk van der Heide lived through five days of blitzkrieg, and having lost his mother, escaped with his uncle and sister, first to England and eventually to America. The record of those five days and the days preceding reveals both the helplessness and the courage of the Dutch. They were helpless, for, in spite of Poland or Norway, they had no conception of total war. Their experience was similar to that of the British, who, in the early days of the war, were incessantly discussing air-raid precautions without the faintest conception of the nature of peril that menaced them. When eventually they confronted the stark reality of massed raids, they plumbed the hidden depths of their courage and gained precious time in which to develop resilience and resistance. The Dutch were not given time for this. Their Five-Days' War uncovered such a web of treachery, cruelty and ruthlessness

that they had to fall back on spiritual reserves of the very existence of which they were unaware. Dirk van der Heide was worrying about his essay on Erasmus, about his fishing gear, and the girl with whom he was in love. " The German Nazis came on the 10th of May and surprised everyone except my father and Uncle Pieter. Uncle Pieter said he had known it all along. . . ." But Uncle Pieter was not quite truthful. Or perhaps, like other Dutchmen all over Holland, he had known it all along, but had shut his eyes to it. Dirk's mother had to die, his father had to be lost in the maelstrom of invasion, Rotterdam had to crumble into smoking ruins, simply because the Dutch gave the Nazis the benefit of the doubt.

Is this a cruel judgment? My Dutch friends who have escaped from the New Order seem to be embarrassed when they are asked why they did not do a great many things they could have done to postpone, or perhaps even avoid altogether, the evil that overwhelmed them. They either launch into voluble explanations or remain strangely silent. But some of them are proud. They echo Balluseck's words: " We are too complacent, too absorbed in the present. . . ." It may be a terrible price to pay—but Dutch courage cannot be any longer a term of contempt in English or any other language. . . .

Ten

The Belgians have the Congo, the Rexist Nazi Party, and a sense of humour, which they need for both.

COUNT FERDINAND CZERNIN

When over land and sea shall reign
In form transfigured all these Seven.
Men, boldly raise your head to heaven,
The Golden Age has come again.

CHARLES DE COSTER

How sweet it is if we can reach death
In peace . . .

FRANCIS JAMMES

FERTILE LAND

I

GOD HAS both blessed and cursed this land of Belgium. He has given her a fat, fertile soil, rivers and forests; He has watched, with benevolent tolerance, the growth of her rich and beautiful cities; He has kindled with His divine fire the souls of her writers and painters, scientists and musicians. But at the same time He has made her the cockpit of Europe in which the soldiers of many centuries have cursed the Flanders mud and the low-hanging sky. He had granted the Flemings and Walloons peace in which to build up commerce and cultivate the arts and crafts, only in the end to let loose upon them the hounds of war. Whether Spaniard or Frenchman, the legions of Rome or the army of Wellington, here in this irregular triangle they found the terrain for their blood-baths. In vain did Leopold of the patriarchal beard and the eye for business fortify himself with alliances and family connections—the "scrap of paper" was as easily torn up by a Hohenzollern as twenty-five years later by a house-painter. The Belgian General Staff could never evolve an adequate plan for frontier defence, because, as the inevitable prelude to war, they always had to yield territory to the enemy before they could make a stand. Belgium's whole history is a forlorn fight for peace.

The constant sense of danger from exterior aggression seems to have acted as a special incentive to strenuous efforts, a powerful fertilizer of the Flemish and Walloon mind. Belgian artists and poets, musicians and architects have all been compelled to work against time. They had no leisure. If a masterpiece was hidden somewhere in them, they had to produce it in a hurry, almost in a fever, before the next wave of war came. Even if it did not break the dykes, its roaring noise at Sedan was sufficient to shake the creative instinct and snuff out its flame.

This continuous urgency of approaching danger explains so much—the austere perfection of Memlinc, the sombreness of Teniers, the ascetic unearthliness of the Van Eycks or the angular shyness of Matsys. But it also explains why Brueghel painted the joys of fleshpot and tankard and why the greatest lover of life and peace, Pieter Paul Rubens, created such pure ecstasies

of sensuality. All his life Rubens fought for peace and all the while the Thirty Years' War stretched—it seemed interminable—into the future. He was daring enough to marry a second wife as young as his oldest son—because he knew how uncertain is the joy of life and how constant the threat of black annihilation. Because he hated bloodshed and violence, his Christs and martyrs are painted with an infinite compassion. Are they not object-lessons in the horror and futility of cruelty? Even the suave and happy-go-lucky Van Dyck could not escape the same spell—his slickest portraits are superimposed upon a brooding undertone of melancholy.

Or listen to the Belgian music. In his "Battle of Marignano," Clément Jannequin, lost in the mists of the sixteenth century, composed the first "programme music," imitating, purely through the medium of the human voice, the roar of cannon, the rattle of volleys, the trumpet calls and the clamour of arms. Not that he had ever been in a battle himself. But in music he found the sublimation of his fear of war. Grétry's compositions, two and a half centuries later, were thin and shy, like the small, protesting voice of a child in an earthquake. The virtuosity of Henri Vieuxtemps was an escape from the realities of a century which saw the most treacherous wars of history. And what about César Franck, the greatest of all the Belgian composers? Although he was a professor of the Paris Conservatoire, his roots were deep in his native Belgium. In an agnostic and impatiently materialistic Paris he would spend the hours before his lessons in the religious calm of the St. Clotilde. He was supposed to teach the organ, but in reality his lectures were about composition, æsthetics, history and orchestration. But above all he tried to implant in his pupils his own peaceful and tranquil ideas. He led them to the true source of music—the past. In his classes the fugues of Bach, old German chorales and cantatas found a new life and significance. Again and again he emphasized his conviction that in a swiftly dissolving world sanctuary can be found only in the mighty citadel of poliphonic art. Life in Paris and Brussels streets might be full-blooded and vociferous, but "Father" Franck, as his pupils called him, preferred to talk of the past. He never tired of warning his pupils against meretricious art—against popular and easily won success. Let them seek inspiration from the solitude of the true artist rather than from the applause of crowds. He set the example in his own works. The *Eightfold Bliss*, the D Minor

Symphony, the Symphonic Variations, the *Prélude, choral et fugue*, and the shimmering, romantic Violin Sonata—all exhibit him as a poet deeply enamoured of peace. His pupils—Vincent d'Indy, perhaps, the most important among them—transplanted into French soil this Belgian longing for security and assured progress.

The same aspiration, the same dominant idea, is more or less apparent in the music of Tinel and Lekeu, Jongen and Willaert, Dufay and Ockehem, unchanged through the changing centuries.

Read the books of Belgian writers—strangely neglected in the Anglo-Saxon world—and you will find the same all-pervading characteristic: the distaste for violence, the craving for peace. Charles de Coster's great Tyll Eulenspiegel is the embodiment of this idea. He stood for the peace-loving, honest burgher who is driven to fight, and to fight well, because the tyrants will not let him alone, because he wants not merely to avert danger, but to remove its cause. Maeterlinck in his Blue Bird sent Myltyl and Tyltyl on a long and nightmarish quest for the symbol of happiness only to discover, on their return, that all the while it was in their own cottage. And again the pale dream world of Pelleas and Melisande is tinged with the same idea. It pulsates in the poems of Emile Verhaeren, interwoven with the intricate rhythms of wind and waves, it is in the verses of the two Rodenbachs, of Potvin, Cammaerts, Van Lerberghe and Picard. A friend to all, an enemy to none—how often has Belgium tried to be just that! And how often has she failed, not always innocently, perhaps, but always as a victim to the passions she has tried to exclude from her frontiers?

II

When I lived in Antwerp I was very poor; when I moved to Brussels I was modestly affluent, so I have seen Belgian life from its two main angles. In Belgium wealth is never ostentatious; Belgian aristocrats are the most democratic I have ever encountered. Looked at as a whole, it is the most middle-class country in the world, though a closer view may disclose a sharp division not apparent at the first glance.

As I was very poor in Antwerp I lived near the docks—in a grim and depressing part of the city on the Scheldt. The narrow canals and innumerable locks, the funnels and sails crowded in the inner harbour, the incessant hooting of the

steam whistles and the roar of the loading and unloading tackle, made it a man-devised inferno. And the seamen who landed here were agog for adventure and pleasure, vanishing in the swirling black tide of the city. At that time the harbour was perhaps the most depraved in Europe. Here Fleming and Walloon were in constant conflict. The Flemings of Antwerp dockland are heavy-bodied, sturdy, tough men; the Walloons are agile, quick-witted and treacherous. The Flemings were always the aggressors, the Walloons were always trying to get their own back!

Many a seaman has vanished in Antwerp, never to be seen again. Some deserted from their ships, for the region of the harbour is a positive maze of alleys and small squares. Some fifty per cent. of the people who lived here when I stayed among them were addicts of either absinthe or ether. The poisonous green drink was to be found in every dive; its bitter smell even filled the streets. Absinthe may seem attractively Bohemian and "naughty" to the visitor to Montmartre, but in the Antwerp dockland it was a terrible master, forcing its servants to commit the most appalling outrages. Having made them unfit for work, it forced them into crime. The addicts of absinthe I found to be quite a distinct species of humanity. Sometimes—though never alone, for I took care to have some Belgian student friends for an escort—I went to *La treize d'or* to watch them. There they sprawled in the smelly, gloomy cellar, their faces haggard, their dull eyes occasionally flashing with greed and terror. Their hands trembled when they lifted their glasses; their very bodies trembled as they drank. I have never witnessed a more degrading scene. A police inspector told me that it was not a rare occurrence for one of these creatures to run amok as if possessed, as they indeed were. This, the police inspector said, was a typical symptom of absinthe poisoning. The absinthe addicts resemble their brothers the morphinists. They lose every inhibition. No price is too high for them, no sacrifice, humiliation shameless or too low that will secure a bottle of this poison.

After a few visits to *La treize d'or* and similar places I began to marvel that human beings could fall so low. There were some sailors who always visited these dives, taking advantage of the absinthe crave of the women who came there. While some of these women were prostitutes, others were the wives of respectable workmen and peasants. I saw some of them

offering absinthe to their children! In their intoxication they were ripe for any beastliness. It was a dark chapter in human behaviour that I watched there in the Antwerp dockland. . . .

As I have said, the strongest rival of absinthe was ether. Ether is known to the average person merely as a somewhat outdated medical narcotic, but its sensual fascinating odour had made it extremely popular in the dockland underworld of Antwerp. Every few yards you might see a girl walking unsteadily, and as she passed, you would smell the unmistakable, acrid, overwhelming reek of ether intoxication. While absinthe is more violent in its effects, ether poisoning leads only too frequently to a hysteria, bordering on madness. It is also the favourite drug of women, which explains why many an "experienced" sailor landed in Antwerp with a big bottle of ether, knowing that it would be more effective than even a well-filled wallet as the means of buying the most expensive harlots of dockland.

Ether, too, has been used extensively by white slave traders to make their victims "amenable." I had read many stories about these flourishing traders, but had always imagined them to be figments of the imagination of unscrupulous newspapermen or of various leagues bent on saving souls which did not want to be saved. In Antwerp, however, I learned that the truth was considerably more sordid and shameless than the most exciting newspaper article. And the organization was so smooth, so matter-of-fact. Here was the demand, and here were certain people prepared to satisfy it. They took risks and incurred losses—but so did any other business men. And how much larger the profits!

III

Brussels was utterly different—because I saw it from a different plane. In Antwerp I was seldom sure where my next meal would come from, while in Brussels I had a monthly salary of 2,750 Belgian francs—not a fortune, but sufficient for a comfortably middle-class existence. Of course, I had to work very hard for it, and before I had got it I had to submit to an examination that lasted three days. Competition was keen, too, and it was perhaps more by luck than merit that I gained the job—I had to deal with the foreign correspondence of a Belgian advertising agency. I lived in an old house remote from the centre

of the city and spent a considerable part of my day in trams. But the evenings were free, and sometimes—but only sometimes—I had a free Saturday afternoon. A friend of mine owned a little sports car, and in this we managed to explore most of Belgium.

My colleagues at the office were kind, but indifferent. Working in a branch of an international concern, they naturally showed little prejudice against foreigners. Most of them had taken university diplomas, Belgium having made commerce and practical economics an important faculty of her ancient universities. Most of them were married, though few had been able to afford a family. Their ambition was simple: to hold what they had got. They realized that in this uncertain world it was absurd to strive for more than they had already achieved—but at least they hoped to be allowed to enjoy the fruits of their study and hard work. Only one among them belonged to the Rexist Party—led by Louis Degrelle, that strange young mountebank—and he had probably joined it merely because he was an undersized youth with a hare lip and an inferiority complex.

My friend of the sports car was an artist; his speciality was the restoration of old paintings and murals. When I was given my fortnight's holiday I decided to spend it with him. He was restoring the pictures of an ancient monastery church about ten miles from Brussels. I found it was fascinating to watch him handling the old canvases, until, under the influence of chemistry and his own skill, the faded colours recovered their old brilliance and hidden beauty was again made manifest.

One afternoon I helped him to remove from its heavy frame a picture of St. Peter. It was fastened to a wooden board, and this had become so warped during the passing centuries that there was a gap between the canvas and wood. When we removed the bolts and the thin strips of oak which held them together an avalanche of paper fell at our feet. It consisted of letters, each carefully folded. The writing was in French, faded and ornate, in two different hands. While my friend went on with his work I carried them to a pew underneath a stained-glass window and sorted them out.

They formed part of a correspondence between a young monk and an even younger girl who lived near the end of the eighteenth century. They must have been in love—but he clung to his vow, and she must have been a disciple of Goethe's Werther and

the doctrine that love demands self-sacrifice and renunciation. The correspondence was incomplete. In fact, I think these letters had survived only because they had slipped too deeply behind the framework to be recovered. Or perhaps the monk had hidden them there against discovery by his superiors, though this seemed to be unlikely. St. Peter had been an indifferent postman and must have caused many a misunderstanding between the lovers. In the end, it seemed, the girl set out for Paris . . . a year before the Terror began. I spent the whole afternoon reading the faded script, trying to puzzle out here and there a colloquial phrase. In one of the young monk's letters I came across a passage that might have been written yesterday—or to-day:

> "Even if I were not bound by my vow of chastity, nor you by the wishes of your father to marry someone of your own class, our happiness would be precarious and beset by many dangers. For the spirit of our time is impatient of happiness and the sighs of lovers are drowned in the thunder of violence. . . ."

How many lovers in this fertile land, I wonder, are condemned to share the same impatience after the lapse of a hundred and fifty years?

IV

Perhaps the most enduring and stable emotion in the Belgian soul was affection for the bereaved young king. The Brussels burgher, the Flemish fisherman, or the shepherd of the Ardennes, took an almost personal interest in the daily life of the royal family. The illustrated magazines which published pictures of the royal children who had so tragically lost their mother were always sold out in a few hours. This affection, this close contact between dynasty and people was due to a thousand and one reasons. It had become even closer during the first world war when the personal heroism of the royal family filled every Belgian with admiration. The Dowager Queen Elisabeth was especially beloved. Belgians showed a solicitous concern for the upbringing of the three royal children, especially after Queen Astrid's death.

While in Brussels I was taken by the Queen Mother's secretary to the wing of the palace where the children spent most of their

day, and I was able to see Princess Josephine Charlotte and Crown Prince Baudouin. This excellent gentleman told me a great deal about the regimen of the royal children—a regimen which showed how practical and democratic were the lines on which their education was being conducted. Their day began at a quarter to seven with gymnastic exercises and a cold shower. After breakfast they were driven from the Palace of Stuyvenberg to the royal palace at Brussels. Stuyvenberg, by the way, is only a palace in name; actually it resembles a middle-class and unpretentious villa. In one of the wings of the Brussels palace a miniature school had been equipped. It was staffed by a headmaster, a lady teacher and a number of visiting professors. In addition to the royal children its pupils included children of both aristocratic and middle-class families. All the pupils received precisely the same treatment and each of them had to take home a weekly report on his or her progress. Instruction was given in both French and Flemish to equip them in the dominant languages of the bi-lingual country.

The lady teacher of Flemish had been selected, through a newspaper advertisement, by the late Queen Astrid herself. She had little idea what her job would turn out to be when she answered one evening this advertisement in the Brussels *Soir*. Her special charge was Prince Albert, the youngest child. I watched the little prince—he was three and a half at that time—taking a walk in the palace gardens, his hands in his pockets, and a most determined look of concentration on his puckered little face.

Josephine Charlotte, a perfect little lady of eleven, looked sad and serious—as if she felt the responsibility of her motherless younger brothers. My guide told me that she rarely smiled. It was difficult to guess at her thoughts; she was a reserved and taciturn child. She liked best the weeks she spent in Sweden with her grandmother. Lessons lasted from half-past eight to twelve and from two to four. Then the royal pupils were taken back to Stuyvenberg. Crown Prince Baudouin was an enthusiastic radio fan and if his weekly school report was satisfactory, his father usually permitted him to stay up in the evening for the late programmes. He and Josephine Charlotte were reading a good deal. They had their meals in the family circle with a single servant to provide for their needs.

I wandered through the rooms of the palace. Apart from the great reception chambers everything was furnished very

simply. The King's study resembled that of any civil servant with telephones, books and papers on the broad desk.

I discovered that Crown Prince Baudouin's ambition was to become a sailor. But unfortunately, a crown prince could not permit himself the luxury of choosing his own career. He also loved to cycle and usually played at running the "Tour de France" race in the park. In Sweden he had a special small wooden hut in the royal park where he kept his tools for his hobbies of carpentry and model building.

I watched the royal children for about half an hour from a thick clump of trees. They were well-behaved, soft-voiced yet not at all repressed. When the Queen Mother's secretary introduced me, they gave me their hands without shyness. We chatted for a few moments about their recent holiday in Switzerland where they had learned to ski. Then they went back to the school-room. I felt sorry for them. Their fate was linked to that of this fertile land and once more it seemed that the precarious peace of Belgium was threatened from the west. . . . Would Crown Prince Baudouin ever rule, I wondered—or would he realize his childish ambition and become a sailor?

V

Shortly before I left Belgium I met perhaps the most original of her writers—a man whose work was little known beyond the frontiers of his country and half-unknown even to his French-speaking compatriots. For Karel van de Woestijne wrote in Flemish—wrote in what is in fact a heavy, cumbersome dialect, resembling the "Platt-Deutsch," that harsh and unlovely language of lowland Germany. Yet the Flemings and the Dutch were proud of him and modern Flemish literature lives on his heritage to this very day. He died in 1929, at the age of fifty-one. Thanks to him the Flemish poetical language has been so reshaped and enriched that in its medium the latest, youngest generation is enabled to write verse just as expressive and gracious as those of the English, French or Italian poets.

We talked in English, a language he loved though he did not speak it very fluently. He called it "a man's language," the most concise and clear-cut in the world. He told me much about his life and work. Later I read some of his poems and short stories in a fairly good English translation—though I

felt doubtful if any translation could do more than half justice to his genius.

He had begun to write as a young schoolboy, but was in perpetual rebellion against the poverty of his own language. He spent much time fishing from the banks of the Lys (he was born in Ghent and spent his whole life there) a contemplative pursuit which did not entirely absorb his thoughts, and whenever a particularly expressive adjective or turn of phrase occurred to him, he would reach for his little leather-bound notebook and jot it down. If he awoke during the night and remembered some strange onomatopœic word, he rushed to his desk before he forgot it.

Not a single young Flemish writer or poet could escape his influence. His way of expression, his special insight, his stylistic structure and the ideas of his work were all so alive and brightly coloured that no one could surpass him. His poems were written in the new, rich language " created " by him ; its words could not be found in any dictionary—only by grasping the general context of the sentence could their meaning be comprehended. The tone of his poems was that of the 'cello—restrained and sometimes dim in the first moment ; but this " dimness " vanishes at once as we enter into the poet's mind. Van de Woestijne demanded his reader's " collaboration " ; you had to " give " yourself if you wanted to enjoy and understand him. But it was worth the trouble ; for he opened doors to unsuspected vistas. His language was filled with adjectives which the long-established and " codified " French or English did not know at all ; that is the reason why it has been almost impossible to translate him into French. His English translations are more effective and form the bridge to the wide world across which his poetry is slowly becoming known.

During his life (and since his death, too) there has been no Flemish literary publication which did not contain some argument about his forceful poetry and his unforgettable language. He treated language like soft clay, forming, shaping, kneading it with gusto, sometimes with almost childish pleasure, but always with art and skill. In this respect he was closely related to Joyce, though the ideas and tones of his poetry showed kinship, however distant, with that of Baudelaire. His individuality was that of a lonely, secretive, restless and bitter soul.

He told me in some detail about his long short story *De Boer die sterft* (The dying peasant) which was afterwards adapted

for the stage. The old peasant, close to the hour of his death, has five visions. He is visited in turn by each of his five senses, personified by some character of his life, who take leave from him and at the same time bring him realization of life's pleasures and beauties. Later I read it, trying to get through to the original Flemish and using a German translation to help. It had details which remained unforgettable. He seemed to be the master of grief, of tears, but also of compassion and hope.

I talked to Van de Woestijne about the feeling of general insecurity, of the futile longing for peace, I had sensed in this fertile country of his.

" Yes, it is there, truly," he said. " We all have been trying to express it. But this time the hurricane will not spare any country. Ideologically, at any rate, the nineteenth century began with the Vienna Congress and ended in August, 1914. The twentieth century will be much shorter-lived. And when it ends we shall step not forward into the twenty-first—but back to the Middle Ages."

" And what of Belgium ? " I asked. " Surely your country could never sink back to so low a level after all that your artists and writers have achieved ? "

" In Belgium," he replied, " there is a deep-rooted duality. In the face of common peril, Walloons and Flemings have forged a *modus vivendi*. But now, because they fail to realize that no nation can live in Europe without being part of a European community, they are at loggerheads again. Degrelle is only a symbol of this strife—and a sorry symbol he is. But in this disillusioned century of ours, the mountebank has a better chance than the seer or the exponent of unpleasant common sense. Yes, the shadow is creeping closer and neither the Library of Louvain nor the beauty of Bruges will stop its advance. . . ."

When on a brilliant May morning I read of the invasion of Belgium I remembered Van de Woestijne. The shadow had crept closer and closer until at last it has covered the whole of that irregular triangle between Holland, France and Germany. . .

Eleven

. . . They have yearned for peace, they had organized for peace. They had left perhaps too late their attempt to keep complete neutrality, in the hope that peace might come to them . . .

A. V. ALEXANDER (*in the House of Commons, speaking about the Norwegians, 11th April, 1940*)

Quickly sailed wild Lemminkainen,
On the blue back of the ocean;
Sailed he days and nights unceasing,
Till at last he reached the borders
Of his own loved home and country;
There he beheld scenes familiar,
Saw the islands, capes and rivers,
Saw his former shipping stations,
Saw he many ancient landmarks,
Saw the mountains with the fir trees,
Saw the pine trees on the hilltops;
Did not see his father's cottage,
Not the dwellings of his mother.

KALEVALA (*The Finnish National Epic*)

Yes, friend, expect common sense and solid goodwill from us but no affection; the Northern Lights dazzle, but do not warm.

AUGUST STRINDBERG

NORTHERN LIGHTS

I

A FRENCH POET called them "the Three Sisters, ever-aloof under the Northern Lights." But I think they should be rather regarded as step-sisters, begotten by the same father but borne by three different mothers. The homely happiness of Denmark was so different from the more austere outlook of Norway, while Sweden was perhaps closest to the main European trends of thought. Three sisters, but each with her own dreams and her

individual destiny. It is as if a Viking had married first a Druid priestess, next a courtier's daughter and last a dairy-maid. Norway, Sweden, Denmark—outposts of Europe in the Northern Sea, aloof and cold maybe in some respects but, more than any European country, endowed with the essentials for happiness and contentment—until Adolf Hitler devised his myth of the " Nordic race " as a pattern for conquest and shameless oppression.

Because they were somewhat removed from the main European battlefield; because they seemed to prefer to settle their disputes by civilized methods of argument and arbitration than by the drastic folly of war, they have been called both weak and selfish. But it was the dream of a Swedish manufacturer of explosives to make amends for the curse of his invention, which created the Nobel Prizes and gave a financial foundation to the international fellowship of the arts and sciences. The strength of the Scandinavian countries was moral and intellectual rather than physical; instead of fortifications and weapons, they relied on courage and faith. Their mistake was to trust in the fundamental decency of human beings, forgetting how easily dictators could overcome such insubstantial obstacles. How amazed Norway must have been by her Quislings! To a nation of hard-working fishermen and woodcutters, surely treachery was unthinkable. They soon discovered that even in a democracy which has attained a modicum of perfection, there are adventurers prepared to sell their souls for precarious power. In Denmark the danger had been threatening for so long that the Danes had become almost accustomed to it; when the Germans came they brought merely the climax of a long campaign of propaganda and cajolery. Some say that the Nazis took Sweden " by telephone," that by diplomacy they accomplished all that an occupation would have achieved. Yet even now Sweden still enjoys a free press—some of it vigorously pro-democratic—and continues to be a battleground for Allied and Axis propaganda. To whatever degree Hitler's plans have succeeded in Scandinavia, the pre-1939 life of the Scandinavians has been rudely shattered. The fact that great men like Knut Hamsun and Sven Hedin have openly espoused the Nazi cause indicates the depth of cleavage that has been brought about within the space of a few years. Reading the apologia for Hitler & Co., which these two outstanding Scandinavians have published, I feel as if the performance of a noble symphony had been marred by a sudden, mad sequence of crashing discords. This poison

is the subtlest ever concocted in the devil's kitchen; it works in the most disconcerting and unexpected manner. It is plain that when the democracies have won their war, a long and arduous period of re-education will be essential . . . not only in the Axis countries and those of their satellites, but also in the " victim " states. Scandinavia will have to learn that joy in achievement and the quiet consciousness of spiritual supremacy are not enough. Every country and every individual will have to fight for their freedom. This is a lesson which must be learned by Britain fully as much as by Italy and Germany. . . .

II

A battered coal freighter had brought me from Riga to Stockholm. Though I had been travelling for three days across the endless Polish plains and the flat Latvian country, I could not sleep. These were the " white nights " of the Northern summer, when the sun seemed scarcely to leave the sky and the glory of cloud and sea was too lovely to be missed. The old tramp rarely carried passengers and my bunk was in the foc's'le. I spent most of the thirty-six hours of the crossing on deck. Compared with the oceans of the world, the Gulf of Riga is but a millpond; yet my slow, chugging progress across these steel-blue waters gave me a far greater thrill than either of my two Atlantic crossings. The long drawn-out approach to Stockholm through the Baltic archipelago, with the innumerable islets, wooded tufts of land, each with its house or houses —a flag-staff on the front lawn with the flag proudly flying if the owner was in residence—offered to me a panorama of a Northern Eden, so fresh, so gleaming with peace and happiness, that I forgot my weariness and the grimy deck on which I was standing. Of all European cities Stockholm has the loveliest distant approaches and intimacy does not bring disillusionment.

Next day I was sitting with some Swedish newspapermen in the open-air restaurant on top of one of the twin skyscrapers in the Kungsgatan.

" By the way," the news editor of the *Svenska Dagbladet* suddenly asked, " have you heard that the Hungarian Army is marching on Vienna? "

" The Hungarian Army? " I repeated stupidly. " Doing what? I . . . I don't understand. . . . "

" Haven't you seen any papers to-day? " he asked. " There's

a revolution in Austria. They've set fire to the Justizpalast. As the Viennese Government can't deal with the situation, they've called in Hungarian troops. . . ."

"But . . . but it's incredible. . . . Are you positive?"

The editor produced from his pocket a copy of the *Svenska Dagbladet* and pointed to the front page across which bold headlines announced: "RED UPRORET IN VIENNA . . ." "Red uprising . . ." Still I could not believe it. My parents were in Vienna with my young brother. I hurried to the nearest telephone and got through to the Hungarian Legation in Stockholm. A cynical voice—that of Dr. Leffler, the cultured and worldly-wise Press Attaché—admitted that the situation in Vienna was serious, but emphatically denied the story that Hungarian troops were on the march. . . . I asked him to send a wire to the Osterreichischer Hof, where my father usually stayed and returned to the Swedish editor. But Dr. Leffler's statement left him unconvinced.

Before I saw him again I received a cable from my parents telling me that the situation was much quieter and I was not to worry. But the Swedish journalist was unrepentant.

"We are always inclined to believe the worst of the rest of Europe," he said. "It isn't surprising, seeing that the truth is usually far more appalling than the wildest rumour. . . ."

I was a little nettled.

"You Swedes must have a pretty high opinion of yourselves," I replied. "You seem to look at the rest of Europe like a disapproving governess suffering from jaundice."

"But that's how the German comic artists always depict England," he replied, "as an angular governess with horse teeth, hypocritically exclaiming at the misdeeds of the Continental nations while she herself oppresses her colonies. All the same, you are right. We Swedes have got a swollen head—because ever since the Napoleonic days we have managed to keep out of war. And, you'll agree, that's a very long time for any nation in Europe to enjoy peace."

I did not argue with him. I was too uncomfortably aware of my own country's record. But I pondered his remarks while I explored the city. I climbed the many hundred steps of the Town Hall tower, that proud symbol of Swedish genius. Malicious wits maintain that the three gilt crowns surmounting the building are intended to recall the fact that the three crowns were all the money the municipality had left after paying for

its erection. However that may be, there was every sign of prosperity when I was there.

The "Staden-mellan-Broarna," the "City between the Bridges," has changed little since Birger Jarl founded the original fortified town in 1255 to guard Lake Malaren from the Baltic pirates, but the skyscrapers of the Kungsgatan, the new Concert Hall in Hötorget, the Stockholm "Haymarket," the wonderful workers' apartment houses on the Ladugardsgärdet Estate, on Söderhalm, and the Norr Mälarstrand show that the Swedes have good reason to be proud of their more recent achievements. Yet attractive as these modern utilitarian buildings are, I myself prefer the old, crooked streets where the atmosphere of the Thirty Years' War, the fierce fight for the reformed religion seems still to linger. King Charles XII, that wonder of Europe whose legendary ride across the Continent has inspired so many historical novelists, and Gustavus Adolphus were figures who seemed to disprove the belittling view of some historians that the Swedes lost their Viking heritage as soon as they embraced Christianity. Their assimilative powers were quite amazing—greater even than those of the American "melting pot." There were Huguenots who fled to the friendly North and were absorbed with surprising ease; and the royal family has almost forgotten that Charles XIII, creator of the present dynasty, was Bernadotte, one of Napoleon's generals. There must be something in the air and the soil of Sweden to account for such miracles of adaptation. Of course, there have been rebels. I thought a good deal of that fiery spirit, Johan August Strindberg, "the son of the servant maid," whose many-volumed autobiography is a relentless confession of spiritual torture and glory. How he hated himself when he wrote his denunciation of women and of love! And how he hated Swedish smugness—while being more than a little smug himself about his own achievements! Yet he could be tender and childlike, touched by the beauty of his country, thrilled by her past glory.

I took an electric train to Saltsjœbaden, the fashionable health resort, about an hour's journey. I did not stay at one of the swagger hotels but camped on the wooded Isle of the Happy, Beatelund. Some thousands of boys, of fifteen different nationalities, were under canvas also, and the Scandinavians were certainly the noisiest and happiest. They disdained even the scantiest bathing-trunks for their morning dip; and later, during a visit to Saltsjœbaden, I saw that their elders did the

same. A scene of ancient Greece, transposed to the North—that parade of healthy and handsome bodies, cleaving through the dark blue waters of the lake. Our own bathing costumes evoked such pitying glances that we also abandoned them. Swedish nudism is utterly different from the German variety. There is nothing self-conscious or defiant about it. It is simply the acceptance of the fact that the waters of the North have been created for direct contact with the skin and that it is alike hypocritical and unhealthy to interpose a barrier between the two.

Those were happy days on Beatelund, with the fir trees tracing intricate patterns above our heads and in the evenings the songs and jests of fifteen nations around the vast camp fires. I vowed that I would spend my old age in this country of hot sun and keen, clear cold—even if the Swedes were rather stuck-up. . . .

One week-end I travelled to Marbacka to visit Selma Lagerlöf, whose books have warmed the heart and fired the imagination of many thousands. She was old and frail when I visited her. Kindness and sweetness shone in her soft eyes. But there was a little of the schoolmistress in her manner as she rebuked me, gently but firmly, for what she held to be my excessive praise of *Gösta Berling* and *The Marvellous Adventures of Nils Holgerson*. Indeed, she had been once a school-teacher, and she must have needed all her courage and inner discipline to support her through the long, weary years before—almost at one stroke—she achieved world fame and the Nobel Prize. Our talk wandered to Greta Garbo, whose reputation began with the film version of *Gösta Berling*. We spoke of the beauty of Dalekarla, Selma Lagerlöf's native district. We discussed the uneasiness of Central Europe and the unhappy fate confronting youth.

"I am sorry for the young people of to-day," she said in her soft, gentle voice. "They have inherited the legacy of a wicked war and have to pass it on to their children. Violence is always wicked, but when it becomes cold-blooded it is horrible. And that is what is happening all over the world; people are cruel to one another, with a calculated, cold-blooded cruelty. They laugh at us older men and women who are foolish enough to be romantic or sentimental. The youth of my own country is happy, I believe . . . but it is a precarious happiness. I tremble for every Swedish boy or girl who goes abroad. The influences that are working in other countries are so dangerous.

But of course we cannot shut them off from the world. They —and the youth of the whole world—are entitled to happiness and security. But what hope is there of it? Of all my visitors my warmest welcome is for the young. They may smile at my ideas, but when my heart speaks to them they believe me. I wish I could talk to all young people in the world as I tried to do in my books. . . ."

She came to the door of her modest, grandmotherly house when I left. It was evening, but the long white night had just begun and I could see her clearly even from a distance. I saw how she raised her hands, her walking-stick in one of them. She seemed to be blessing the land and all who lived in it. Then the road turned and she was lost from sight.

III

I had met Peter Poul Pontoppidan at Beatelund. He was a Danish boy of about eleven, with flaxen hair which was almost white, gentian-blue eyes and the agility of a monkey. He was always incredibly grubby, the white cook's cap of the Danish boys worn at an angle and a cheerful grin on his bronzed face. We became close friends, despite my none too fluent Danish and the fact that his knowledge of foreign languages was limited to "Thank you" and "Bitte schön."

When the camp broke up I promised to meet him in Copenhagen. I gave him the name of my hotel, and early one morning he turned up, though I did not easily recognize him, so scrubbed and polished he was. His hair was carefully plastered on his head and he wore a sailor suit which he must have deeply despised. But he assured me he was still Peter Poul Pontoppidan, and presented me with a slip of paper on which his mother had written in English: "My son will guide you wherever you want to go. But please don't take him to the Tivoli."

We went to Ermelunden, the royal park where you feast on strawberries and cream in the midst of attentive tame deer. We visited the Thorwaldsen Museum, where the great sculptor rests under the huge Christ that he considered the finest work of his life, fit symbol for his grave. We had lunch in a modest-looking restaurant, where the bill was anything but modest—and then I asked Peter Poul what he wanted to do.

"I want to go to the Tivoli," he replied firmly.

I mentioned his mother's message.

" Oh, she only wanted to save you the trouble. I always get so excited when I go to the Tivoli."

I tried to argue, but you cannot argue with a miniature hurricane, and soon we found ourselves at the entrance to Copenhagen's big amusement park, the Tivoli. Peter Poul's " so excited " was definitely an understatement. And his energy matched his enthusiasm. It was for me an exhausting adventure. When dusk came and thousands of tiny coloured bulbs began to glow on the fantastic buildings and coloured fountains began to play, even Peter Poul was tired. He suggested that we should sit down somewhere and talk.

" What about ? " I asked.

" Oh, life and things," he replied.

" All right," said I, laughing. " You tell me about life and things."

" No." He was suddenly serious. " I want to ask you a question. I always ask my friends one question. May I ? "

" Go ahead."

" What are you most proud of ? " he asked.

I was a little taken aback.

" What exactly do you mean, Peter Poul ? "

" Well . . . you are a Hungarian," he said. " What are you most proud of ? Is it your country, or your daddy, or your stamp collection—if you've got one—or what ? "

I did my best to tell him ; but I discovered that there were surprisingly few things I was proud of—whether they concerned my country, my family or—but I had no stamp collection. Finally I said :

" But why did you ask me such a difficult question, Peter Poul ? "

" Because I want you to ask me too," he replied. " I only ask others because really I want to answer it myself."

" Very well, then. Go ahead ! What are you most proud of, Peter Poul Pontoppidan ? "

" I am proud to be a Dane," he said with infinite seriousness. " Because we don't want anything from anybody—we can stand by ourselves. I am proud of my daddy, because he is captain of a ship which goes to America and Japan and India . . . and he never loses his way. I am proud of King Christian, because he rides every morning through Copenhagen and does not need a bodyguard. I am proud of Hans Christian Andersen, because he wrote stories which are known to every boy and girl—I

mean, every boy and girl who *counts*. Oh, there are many other things I am proud of . . . but I am too sleepy to tell you now. You must stay in Copenhagen a long time so that I can tell you."

When I arrived at the Pontoppidan house, Peter Poul was fast asleep. His mother—an ample, kindly woman—received us with little clucking noises of disapproval and, having put Peter Poul to bed, offered me coffee and *Wienerbrod*, an airy masterpiece of pastry-cooking which not even the French *patisseries* could duplicate. I told her about my conversation with her son and she smiled.

"Yes, he is very proud. So many of us are. But pride is not enough. It always causes envy. I only hope that Peter Poul and the others do not discover this through some great humiliation. . . ."

When I next visited Denmark, it was winter—and winter in Denmark is enough to make anyone a Hamlet. Denmark knows nothing of the joys of winter. From the sea come perpetual fog and rain. The flat landscape presents no obstacle to the violence of the wind. The lights have to be switched on at two o'clock in the afternoon. The damp air makes the "Sudlander's" bones ache. Everybody is a "Sudlander" to the Dane except his Scandinavian fellow northerners. Most of my Danish friends—mainly writers and journalists—went away if they could afford it. It was surprising how many people could afford it. The postman who brought my letters told me one morning that he was off for three weeks on a Norwegian ski-ing trip—last year he had tried Northern Italy, but there it had rained solidly for twelve days and he was taking no risks.

It was a long and dreary winter that year, though I found good company among the newspapermen of the Danish capital. Their main problem seemed to be how to procure hard liquor. For Denmark had embraced partial prohibition. You could have as much beer and wine as you wanted—but spirits were severely rationed. Nor could you draw your rations unless you had paid your taxes. At the licensed shops you were obliged to produce your tax receipts or go without your brandy or gin. The brewers' profits, by the way, were turned to excellent account. The largest Danish firm, for example, used most of its surplus to endow a great art gallery which has become one of the proudest of Copenhagen's possessions.

On the whole Denmark gave me the impression of an anachronistic Arcadia; an eighteenth-century survival in modern trappings. Minus the democratic traditions and the simplicity of morals and manners, the small principalities of Germany must have been much the same. There, too, a beloved king or duke ruled with a gentle hand—though the morals of those German *Serenissimi* were often scandalous, whereas King Christian's were reputed unimpeachable. The whole of Denmark was somehow *provincial*, unassuming, devoid of all pretentiousness, content to remain, ignored by the more ambitious powers, in the backwaters of Europe. This does not imply that her intellectual and artistic life was dormant or her commerce and shipping unenterprising; but rather that the "old country," to which her seafarers and merchants returned, remained unchanged by prosperity and world crisis alike.

Horse racing was not popular in Denmark. On the other hand, racing pigeons were a national pastime. Favourite pigeons were bought and sold for large sums. The first pigeon to arrive "home" during a race would be awaited with as much excited expectancy as if it were the Derby winner. But the binoculars were trained on the horizon instead of the home stretch. The tote, the bookmakers, the tipsters—all the appurtenances of the race-course—were present. Yet the excitement was less strident, the organization of the sport much less commercial, than is found in horse racing.

I liked the way in which Danish daily newspapers were edited. They had long sections devoted to engagements, weddings, births and obituaries—but they also printed columns of *birthdays*. The year was given in bold type, followed by the name, profession and address of the person whose birthday it was. It follows that the Danes, more than most people, set store by birthday greetings. Another section was devoted to silver and golden wedding anniversaries. One member of the editorial staff was employed exclusively to search the records of churches and registry offices. Sometimes it happened that an absent-minded Danish husband would be reminded in his morning paper that the following day would be his own wedding anniversary and so had time to buy a gift for his wife before she could reproach him with neglect!

I liked the noonday smell of coffee which permeated the corridors of every state department or office block. Danish black-coat workers did not go usually out for lunch. In a

minute one of the desks in each room would be transformed into a luncheon table with a snow-white cloth and attractive cutlery. Sandwiches, cakes and coffee constituted the meal, and a business caller would be invited to share the meal and discuss his errand over it. Democracy in the coffee-pot—yes, this might be the slogan for Danish life. . . .

Has it changed since the Germans decided that they must protect Denmark against her own prosperity and contentment, shock her into realization of her Nordic destiny? I doubt it. No nation suffers fools less gladly. How Danes must laugh at the goosestep and the frothing Nazi orators! Their pigs and cattle are slaughtered, their carefully tended fields devastated, their labour kidnapped into virtual slavery—but I believe their common sense has survived. When Hitler has passed away, like the rain and wind of the Danish winter, the Danes will return to coffee and *Wienerbrod* . . . and the Tivoli.

IV

Oslo was not a friendly city. The Norwegians there made no pretence to like foreigners. Finding Trondhiem but little better, I fled northwards, to see the Lapps, of whom I had heard a great deal and who were supposed to be distant cousins of my own people. I met a few Finns who seemed to prefer Norway to their own country because in it they could take jobs which at home would have been considered degrading. But I never reached Lapland; I got no farther than half-way when I fell ill. It happened in a little coastal town almost opposite the group of Lofoten Islands. There I lay, in the single ward of a tiny hospital. I spoke little Norwegian, and it was in stiff, formal English that the bearded, serious doctor who attended me explained how my sudden collapse on the boat had been due to a violent attack of nicotine poisoning. He insisted on a week's rest and strict diet and confiscated my cigarettes and matches. I tried to bribe the nurses for a smoke, but in vain.

There was only one other patient in the ward—a red-haired unhappy-looking young man with a perpetual scowl. He must have been over six feet. His torso was very muscular, his shoulders broad and his biceps imposing; but one of his legs was immobilized by a contraption that I thought existed only in American cartoons. The first day he ignored me, but by the second we were both so bored (the only available reading

matter I found intelligible comprised a volume of the German *Universum* and a Bradshaw of 1912) that we began to exchange glances and then small talk. My red-headed companion could converse in passable German, helped by various gestures and grimaces. His name, he told me, was Einar Dybwad and he came from the Lofoten. His father, who had been a whaling captain, was drowned at sea. His mother then married a clergyman. Einar loathed his stepfather, whom he described as an *aufgeblasener Heuchler* (conceited hypocrite), and when he was sixteen he ran away from home. He became a herring fisher, and later sailed in a whaling ship far up north. He informed me that he had killed hundreds of seals as well as four polar bears and had come unscathed through a northern hurricane which almost disabled his ship. But when eventually he landed in a whaling town, where girls and *schnapps* were the reward of tired and battered sailormen, he fell, and broke a leg. And now while his shipmates were away on another voyage, he was compelled to stay in hospital until his fracture was healed. Therefore he was unhappy; indeed, furious, for he seemed to be overcharged with physical energy. He also felt some uneasiness lest his stepfather would discover his whereabouts and drag him home to the farm, for although resembling a full-grown giant, he was still a minor.

He was naïvely interested in the "great world," as he called it, and made me tell him about Paris and London, Rome and Berlin. In spite of two years' rough physical work, he was still "keen" on books and music; and the opinions he expressed on the books he had read and the music he had heard were his own.

I asked him which of Ibsen's plays he considered the best, expecting him to name *Peer Gynt* or *The Friend of the People*, but his answer surprised me.

"I think *Brand* is the greatest," he said. "Yet I don't believe it has ever been produced and few people have read it even in Norway. Have you read it?"

I told him I had, when I was but three or four years younger than he was now. The German translation in which I read it must have dulled somewhat the majesty and bleak greatness of the original, yet it made me tremble for all that with its intense and sombre symbolism. *Brand*—the tale of the religious fanatic who sacrificed everything to his God only to lose Him in the end. . . .

After we had discussed the play we talked of Ibsen, that most

irascible of Nordic giants, who castigated his age and his nation, who, despite his deep compassion, saw little hope for the Peer Gynts, Noras, Hedda Gablers or Little Eyolfs of the world. By a natural sequence we turned to Grieg's music—not the tunes which have been prostituted by every "light salon orchestra," but the songs that he based on folk tunes, fruits of his Nordic quest of light and happiness, never ending, never fulfilled. I told Einar of the impression of coldness and unfriendliness I had received in Oslo and Trondhiem.

"No, no," he protested, "just cautious and reserved, but not unfriendly. You must make allowances for our climate. We take a long time to thaw up. If you've met with superciliousness, I wager, it was only among the upper middle classes. There's no friendlier soul in the world than the Norwegian fisherman or sailor. I . . . I'll take you to a pub when we get out of this damned place and show you!"

"But, honestly, isn't it the fact that you don't care for foreigners?" I insisted.

He smiled a little sheepishly.

"Well," he admitted, "foreigners usually mean trouble. The Finns who come from Sweden are often quarrelsome. The Lapps are notorious smugglers, chiefly of liquor. As for the tourist, he usually looks down on us; Norwegian boys who serve as guides to English gentlemen coming over for the trout-fishing are often treated like slaves. We Norwegians prefer to keep ourselves to ourselves. . . ."

"And what would happen if you were to discover that a foreign nation wanted to take your country?" I asked. "Would you fight?"

"No," he said promptly. "My country has never done a thing for me. I've had to slave like a dog for food and shelter, for clothes and drink. I couldn't do worse under the foreigner. Does King Haakon know anything about me? Does he care whether I live or die?" He added something in Norwegian which sounded uncommonly like a curse and stared moodily at his bandaged and suspended leg.

He could not redeem his promise to take me to a pub, as before he could hobble about I had gone. I gave him my address in Budapest and he promised to write. His plans were to give up seafaring and go to a technical school. "If I starve for a year or two I might get a good job," he explained. "Mind you, not in an office—I could never wear a black coat and stiff

collar—but somewhere in the open. They are building dams and power stations up in the north, and they could use me . . ."

I returned to Oslo and talked to a number of Norwegian writers and journalists about their country's aims and ideas. Johan Bojer and Sigrid Undset were politely non-committal. Hamsun declared that the unity of Scandinavia could only be ensured by the close collaboration of all Germanic nations. This great Norwegian novelist seemed to have one pet aversion—big cities. "Unnatural growths like London, New York, Chicago, Paris," he said, "poison the life of mankind. Unless these excrescences are dissolved, the world is heading for catastrophe. We must go back to the farm, the village, the small town if we wish to save our civilization."

So vehement was he that I could not begin to argue with him. He was an old man and impatient. Yet, remembering "Hunger," I seemed to understand his hatred of big cities, such as those along the streets of which young Hamsun himself had once wandered, hungry and lonely, desperately longing for love and human warmth. Chicago, where he drove that tram-car, what a hell it must have seemed to him!

The house in Noststjernen where I visited him resembled less the home of a Nobel Prize winner than that of a prosperous farmer of intellectual tastes. Neither he nor Nils Collett Vogt, nor Hans Wiers-Jenssen could tell me more about Norway than Einar Dybwad had done.

Five years elapsed before I received my first letter from Einar. It had been forwarded from Budapest and had taken three months to travel from the lonely sub-Arctic village in which it was written. He told me that he had finished his course at the technical high school, had secured a good job and was married. "We have two babies," he added, "and a third is on the way. But I still have to work like a slave—even if my keep is somewhat better."

I replied to his letter, but did not hear from him again. But one April day in 1940 the Germans invaded Norway. Three days later, at six o'clock in the morning, I found Einar on the telephone asking how he could get from Euston Station to my house!

When I opened the front-door to his urgent knocking, he enfolded me in a bear-like hug. In a mixture of German—which had not improved since I last saw him—and Norwegian—of which I could not understand a word—he clamoured for food and drink and a bath. When eventually we were able to

sit down and talk, I found it almost impossible to get a coherent story out of him, though in the meantime he had acquired quite a good command of English. Apparently he had been aware that the storm was gathering and had been able to send his wife and five children (yes, there were five now, he told me proudly) to Britain by one of the last passenger planes. He himself had watched the Nazi entry into Oslo and then, as he had rather important information of a secret character, made his way to London. There was some yarn about an obsolete amphibian plane and a British destroyer which I could not get the hang of, so excited was he—but here he was telling me what yellow curs those Germans were and what he proposed to do to them.

"Are you remaining in England?" I asked him.

"In England? When the Nazis are in my country? Man alive, I can hardly wait to get back—and go for them."

"But you told me—don't you remember—you would never fight for King Haakon," I reminded him with a grin.

"King Haakon? I am not fighting for King Haakon. I am fighting for the five little Dybwads! I am fighting for the farm near Namsos I have just finished paying for. I am . . . oh, hell, I am fighting because I hate their guts. I came over to bring information which may help the British; though they seem to be a little slow at understanding things. And I want you to publish my story—how I saw the Nazis . . . and what they did . . . so that everybody in the world may know what swine they are. Are you still pushing a pen?"

He drank most of a bottle of brandy I had kept for special occasions, ate up all the bread and butter in the house and then dictated his story. I polished it up a bit and took it to a publisher. This was the first brief account of the Nazi invasion in Norway and a good many people read it. But by that time my friend was back in Norway and there he stayed to the bitter end. The last news I had of him was that he was serving in a Norwegian destroyer while his wife and the five little Dybwads —all with red hair and violent tempers—were living in Wales.

V

The Three Sisters . . . "ever-aloof under the Northern Lights" . . . are aloof no longer. Norway is fighting for her life, Denmark for her soul, Sweden to be left alone. They

can never again be aloof now after they have passed through this ordeal of blood and cruelty, treachery and heroism. Have they also learned the lesson that Europe is *one*, from the South to the North, from Hammerfest to Constantinople ?

Einar Dybwad has learned it.

Twelve

The world stands out on either side,
No wider than the heart is wide ;
Above the world is stretched the sky—
No higher than the soul is high.
The heart can push the sea and land
Farther away on either hand ;
The soul can split the sky in two,
And let the face of God shine through.

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

No, we have suffered for peace, we deserve it.

CUNO HOFER

Switzerland preserved her neutrality during the Great War, and became the happy hunting ground of alien refugees and profiteers.

ASPREY'S POCKET ENCYCLOPÆDIA

PRACTICAL UTOPIA

I

THE LONG, battered train crawled through the night. I had managed to get a seat at the window and pressed my face to the pane, trying to catch a glimpse of the slowly gliding landscape. For some curious reason I had decided I would keep an exact record of all the stations at which we stopped and was clutching a penny notebook and a grubby stub of a pencil. Of course, I never succeeded in reading the station names and, while trying to do so, I fell asleep, exhausted by the excitement of the journey and the thought of all the marvellous things awaiting me at its end.

Dawn was approaching when I awoke. The train had stopped —not an infrequent occurrence on the Austrian railway system during the early days after the long war—and it was very quiet. Around me about forty boys were asleep in the improvised bunks with which the old Pullman carriage had been fitted. A dim light burned near the door and beneath it dozed the nurse who was in charge of us, with her neat cap awry on her grey hair. In the stillness that comes immediately before the dawn I heard the sound of falling water and when my eyes became used to the dim light I saw snow-covered mountain-sides and far above them a bare pinnacle. I sat watching it, as slowly the dawn came. Then a first, pale flash, reddening and glowing until the bare rock shone like a diamond in the glory of the sunrise and the snowy slopes flushed to rose colour. I hugged myself with joy, still grasping my notebook and pencil, and scarcely dared move lest the miracle, so fragile and unearthly, should vanish, were I as much as to blink my eyes. With a grinding heave the train began to move again. An hour later we passed Feldkirch, the Austrian frontier station, and entered a broad plain framed by distant mountains. Soon the train stopped again, this time at a newly-painted, bright-looking station over which the Swiss flag was flying. We had arrived at Buchs . . . Hundreds of children clambered from the train and formed into excited groups. Smiling girls handed us thick slices of bread and butter, mugs of steaming chocolate and two oranges apiece. We took large bites of the bread, sipped the chocolate and fondled the oranges, hardly daring to start to peel them. Many of us had never seen an orange before and few indeed could remember having eaten one! We felt as if we were in dreamland, the paradise of all good little boys and girls.

What was behind us? Four years of war, which had reduced the richest agricultural country in Central Europe to the verge of starvation, two revolutions; an occupation by a hostile and rapacious army; and a wave of White Terror which had slowly subsided into a restoration of order. Our country had been mutilated. The blockade, so decisive in winning the war for the Allies, had softened our bones, made our skin grey and dimmed our eyes. Belgium, Holland, the Scandinavian countries and most of all Switzerland—all opened their hearts to the under-nourished, miserable children of the Central Powers. Train loads of Austrian, Hungarian and German children rolled westwards.

Though I had never actually starved, the doctor of the Hungarian League for Child Protection who examined us recommended me as a passenger in one of these " Children's Trains." I was not greatly moved by the prospect of better food—but I did feel an immense thrill at the idea of seeing a new country, meeting new people. There was also a pleasant sense of uncertainty about our destination ; for none of us was told in advance in what sort of family we should find ourselves.

At Buchs we were split up into small parties. A kind-looking nurse took charge of me and of another boy and together we boarded a beautifully clean train. A large, well-illustrated guide-book was kept on a small shelf next to the door and to our Central European minds it seemed incredible that no one was tempted to steal it. We kept up an incessant fire of questions, but the nurse could not tell us much, beyond the fact that we were being met at a small station not far from the Bodensee, which is half-Swiss and half-German. We changed trains at Romanshorn and in the afternoon arrived at Lengwyl-Oberhofen. When we had passed the ticket collector, we found an old-fashioned electric brougham awaiting us with a smart chauffeur in a brown uniform who sported a soft, fair moustache. It was becoming more and more like a fairy tale—a car ! and a chauffeur ! for us !—and we were even more thrilled when we were stopped on the highway and told to dip our shoes into an immense bowl filled with Lysol. Foot and mouth disease had been reported in another *canton* and this was one of the precautions the authorities had ordered.

The road curved, we turned into a drive, and we found ourselves in front of a tall white building set in a long, beautiful front garden. Golden letters on the front of the house spelling the word : Liebburg . . . The Castle of Kindness. We had arrived.

II

At first it was all very strange and disconcerting. My companion, Steve and I, slept in a small wooden cottage and were under the supervision of Herr Steiger. " Father Steiger "—he insisted that we should call him so—looked exactly like Walt Disney's Grumpy except that he wore a long grey beard. He had spent most of his life in Africa spreading the gospel of his particular faith—he was an Adventist—among the heathen. Though the heathen did not pay much heed to the gospel of

love and charity, they were at least bullied into the adoption of Father Steiger's notions of cleanliness and morality. Every morning and evening there was a long bout of prayer, and as Father Steiger was apt to lapse into "Schwyzer Dutsch," one of the amazingly varied dialects of Switzerland, we had great difficulty in understanding him. One thing that my companion and I bitterly resented was having to sleep together in one bed and—even more—that Father Steiger snored almost as sonorously as he prayed. We ate our meals at the chauffeur's house. His wife was taciturn and shy, and there was a son named Casperl who laughed at our halting "Hochdeutsch." There was also Jakob, who farmed the extensive fields belonging to the Liebburg. There were also his seven children all of whom worked very hard. About the second week after our arrival foot-and-mouth disease broke out in the village and Jakob and his family spent day and night watching their precious cattle. We were left very much to ourselves after being inspected by a stern-eyed old lady who was addressed as "Fräulein Roth," although to our young eyes she seemed to be far too ancient to be a spinster. The mistress of the castle was away on a holiday and—for a time—we two Hungarian boys were treated rather like strange young animals who must be kept at arm's length.

I did not get on well with Steve. He was a bully and liar and often managed to put the blame on me for mischief he had committed. Those honest Swiss people were bewildered when we failed to live up to their standards of behaviour. In particular they hated falsehoods and once or twice Father Steiger felt compelled to beat us, to the accompaniment of long Bible quotations.

On an afternoon when I was sitting in an arbour, homesick and miserable, crying a little and then scribbling bad poetry in my notebook, a voice made me look up. I saw a stately old lady with a mass of piled-up white hair, blue eyes and a face with which time had dealt gently. "Who are you?" she asked. I jumped to my feet and mumbled my name. "I am Frau Hofer-Roth," said the lady. "Why are you so untidy? Have you been crying? Why? Tell me, I won't scold you."

She listened in silence, clutching her ebony stick and drawing patterns with the toe of her shoe in the sand of the garden path. I told no tales. But she must have detected the undercurrent of resentment in my voice. She dismissed me with a friendly admonition not to take life so seriously. "You will see in

this country," she said, " that people have learned to take the rough with the smooth and make the best of both. Life is not for complaint but for satisfaction."

Though I had not understood all she meant she had soothed me. The next day Steve was sent away to a boarding-school, where he remained until his return to Hungary, and I was installed in a small white room on the top floor of the château. Slowly I learned to know the inhabitants of Liebburg and to take part in the everyday life, so different from anything I had ever experienced.

Frau Anita Hofer-Roth was a widow who had lost her husband fairly early in her married life though there were already six children when he died. Hers was an old and distinguished Swiss patrician family. One of her daughters had married an important Swiss diplomat, another an Italian Duke. Her oldest son was a banker in Buenos Aires, the second was a diplomat and writer who had married a Hungarian Countess. A third and fourth son were heads of a large commercial export and import firm in Spain. Although some of them now had grandchildren of their own, she continued to be the final authority on all their decisions. She had a fine impatience with injustice and inefficiency and a deep sympathy, which never seemed to run dry, for all who suffered.

A few days after I had moved into the château I went into the big dining-room to fetch something for Fräulein Roth and was much startled in the dusk to hear someone angrily mumbling and muttering. I switched on the light and found a white-bearded old man sitting in an arm-chair, staring at me fiercely and shaking his stick. I retreated in haste only to be scolded by Fräulein Roth. " That is Herr Roth, Anita's brother and mine," she told me. " He must never be disturbed."

It was Emily, the chubby-faced parlour-maid who told me the story of Herr Roth; although I could not understand all its implications, later when I met Cuno Hofer, his nephew, he gave me the added information to complete the picture. It seemed that Herr Roth was a very rich man who had retired at forty-five to devote his fortune to the furtherance of international understanding and peace. At one time he was unofficial adviser to the Nobel Peace Prize Committee, financed books and lectures, exchange-visits of various nationals, a library and various other organizations, all in the interests of peace. He was convinced that, in spite of the many shortcomings of the politicians

and military leaders, humanity was moving towards universal happiness. He was a well-known figure in the pacifist circles of scientists and writers, of artists and visionaries. If he was a crank he was a very practical and hardheaded one.

On the day that the Great War broke out he was found wandering in the streets of Geneva. He never recovered his reason. It was a quiet and twilight madness—but strangers excited him and he would never leave the Liebburg, even for a walk.

His passion for peace and international co-operation was inherited by his nephew, Cuno Hofer, Frau Anita's son, who had written many books and delivered innumerable lectures on the subject. For a while he collaborated with Count Coudenhove Kalergi. Then he became involved in a most embarrassing and eventually fatal situation; an American woman named Simone Boulter fell in love with him, though he was happily married and adored his wife. At first he was polite to this American admirer, but after some unpleasant scenes in which she involved him, he refused to see her again. A few weeks later the insanely infatuated woman killed him at St. Moritz. . . .

I stayed with Frau Hofer-Roth for a year, though not always at the Liebburg. She was an incorrigible traveller in spite of her great age, and was seldom at home more than five months in the year. At Christmas all her children and grandchildren came to stay with her, however great the distance, but in the early spring she would start on a peregrination which took her all over Europe. When she discovered that I had the rudiments of good manners and did not get into trouble when left alone, she took me with her. In that brief year we visited St. Moritz, Zermatt, Zurich, Berne, Basle and Interlaken, spent a few weeks at San Sebastian, the French Riviera and Paris. And she would have taken me with her on her next and even more exciting trip to Buenos Aires, if my parents had not decided I had better return to Hungary and continue my school studies.

III

How often, looking back on that stimulating and adventurous year, have I saluted my good fortune! Although I was but a boy, Frau Anita treated me like a grown-up, according me the same liberties, demanding the same responsibilities, as if I had been ten years older. I learned many things during those twelve months and some of them I have never forgotten.

Perhaps the most vital development I experienced was in my attitude towards religion. I had been born a Catholic, and though the Roman liturgy made a strong appeal to me with its dignified pomp, I found it too impersonal and in some ways even frightening. Confession I regarded as an outrage against privacy. Though I had met many kind and understanding priests, the Jesuit in charge of our religious education at school was a severe, tight-lipped, Savonarola-like figure who threatened us with everlasting damnation if we did not live up to his strict precepts. Of course we never did, but the bogey of hell-fire and pitch-forked devils (for *his* inferno was intensely realistic) turned our dreams to nightmares. This at least was the case with the more sensitive boys; the others just grinned and tried to wriggle out of the obligation to serve as an acolyte at Sunday mass.

The members of the Liebburg household gathered every evening in the drawing-room for family prayers. Frau Anita read a chapter from the Bible and then prayed aloud for all of us. On Sundays she conducted a simple service which was attended by every man, woman and child on the estate.

It was Frau Anita who gave me my first Bible—though she was tactful enough to choose a Roman Catholic version. The Holy Writ opened to me a world of wonder and spiritual adventure. I learned the Gospel of St. John by heart and delved deep into the poetry of the Psalms. At the same time Frau Anita explained to me that though the search for God was common to all men, yet the choice of the paths for this search was free to the individual. But she made no attempt to proselytize me. Indeed when she found me engrossed in a volume that set forth the misdeeds of the Popes, she gently took it from me. "You must not credit all that is written here," she said. "Men who believe strongly often try to disparage those who believe otherwise. Moreover, there are wicked men in every religion, every nation, and every profession—and it is not the Christian way to judge the community by its worst individuals."

She never tried to over-simplify things. She spoke to me in her own language and if I did not completely understand, I brooded over what she had said, turning it over in my mind until the meaning was clear. That was the reason why her words stuck in my memory so long and had so lasting an effect on me.

The second thing I learned in Switzerland was the meaning

of freedom. My own country had fought for its liberty so often and with so little success that her sons had no real conception of it. There was always someone in power who had to be propitiated by a pseudo-allegiance; there was always some political party which had to be flattered. Speech, action, writing were always to some extent limited, restrained—with the inevitable result that the ideas they expressed lost their full freshness, their spontaneity. But here everybody could say exactly what they thought. Though Jakob, the tenant-farmer, was most respectful to Frau Hofer-Roth, if he disagreed with her he did not hesitate to speak his mind freely. The servants in Liebburg were not the cringing, robot-like creatures I have too often met in Hungary—they were individuals and, their work over, free to live their own lives.

Then again, I discovered the true significance of work. I had never before seen anybody at close quarters engaged in manual labour—apart from household chores. Here on the five-hundred acre farm there was plenty to do for Jakob and his children. Anton, the chauffeur, had a small workshop in which he did carpentering or any odd job that was needed. Fräulein Roth, who thought idleness the greatest evil and did not care to see a boy reading or writing to excess (a sin of which I was always capable) devised a series of tasks for me which kept me busy for most of the day. I worked in the big dairy, where cheeses of great girth were made and electric churns turned out huge slabs of butter. I helped Gabriel, the gardener, to cover up his beloved rose trees against the winter and transplant cyclamens and chrysanthemums in the glass-house. But sometimes I slipped away and went for long walks in the woods which spread almost to the shores of the Bodensee. There was an autumn tang in the air, but at noon it was still warm enough to lie on the soft carpet of pine-needles and ponder the new, bewildering things I was learning.

That year taught me how little the rigid limitations of nationality counted.

When I heard Giulietta, the portly cook sing in a language which I found resembled Latin, I asked her whether she was Italian. She shook her ample shoulders immediately. "No, you silly boy, I am Swiss!"

I ran to Frau Anita and begged her to explain how Italians, Germans and French could all call themselves Swiss, and she told me the story of the "*Eidgenossenschaft.*" What a revealing

name that was! "Comradeship under oath!" Ever since the three cantons of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden had sent their sober representatives to the mountain top and vowed to combine against the tyrant Habsburgs, there had been no discrimination against race, tongue or nationality. They fought for their freedom and the principles of toleration—fought well and selflessly. Morgarten, Sempach, Nafels, Hericourt, Granson, Morat . . . there are many glorious names in Swiss history which those who call the Swiss a nation of hotel-keepers would do well to remember. . . .

And Frau Anita told me how Switzerland had always been a haven for the persecuted. Even when religious intolerance had its brief sway in Calvin's Geneva, it did not affect more than a comparatively small part of the confederation. Voltaire came to this blessed country when his mordant wit made him equally unpopular in France and Prussia; Rousseau dreamed here of his Social Contract and the Return to Nature; poets, political reformers, religious dissidents have found rest and help in the twenty-two cantons. From James Joyce to Thomas Mann, from Lenin to Wagner, how many great spirits reached sanctuary among these mountains, on the shores of these placid lakes! Truly, it was a practical utopia, built with blood and sweat, worthy to be preserved to the end of human history. And if rapacious nations abused her hospitality, if, during the European wars, she became a hunting-ground for spies and adventurers, whose fault was that? The Swiss could not change human nature; they were human themselves, with human weaknesses. But if the secret agents came here, so did the agents of mercy. Was not the Red Cross born on Swiss soil? If speculators and "Schieber" used her territory for their unscrupulous transactions, here also was established the League of Nations. It was not the Swiss who sabotaged President Wilson's dream of international understanding. No doubt some Swiss lived on the tourists and lived too well on them. On the other hand, let us remember the sanatoria at Davos and Arosa and the international youth hostels where boys and girls of Europe could meet without restraint and suspicion to discover that they were brothers and sisters under the skin.

But my eyes became fully open to all the aspects of this practical utopia only when Frau Anita took me travelling. From Lucerne to St. Gallen, from Zug to Ticino, we journeyed in the old-fashioned but mechanically faultless electric brougham,

and the old lady seemed to be indefatigable in explaining and extolling the beauties of her native land. When, in the end, I had to return to Hungary, I felt as if I were expelled from paradise. I even tried to escape from the train and sneak back to the little white village to which the Liebburg belonged. But, alas! they caught me and sent me eastwards, where the turmoil of Central Europe was seething and where people had forgotten tolerance and understanding.

IV

Until her death I received a letter from Frau Anita every week. They were long letters of sloping copper-plate script written in violet ink. Six or seven times a year she enclosed a Swiss banknote "to buy whatever you would like best. . . . But first think it over carefully to make sure it is what you really want. . . ." I usually saved the money until the long summer vacation and spent it on travel. She continued opening up new wonders and new adventures for me . . . until one day I received a letter with a black border . . . the announcement of her death at Rapallo. For years afterwards Cuno Hofer, her author son, corresponded with me and I met him several times. His tragic end moved me just as deeply as did the death of his mother.

With all these memories and impressions it was little wonder that I returned to Switzerland again and again. Whenever I felt that the European madhouse was becoming unbearably noisy and crowded I sought for a spell of her sanity and calm. Here the newspapers were not trying to spread the gospel of hate; though they had their own opinions and expressed themselves forcibly, they were always able to perceive that there are two sides to every question. It is the same to-day. In the midst of this rapidly spreading war the Swiss dailies seem to be the only ones in Europe that retain an unbiased outlook. Almost without exception they stand for democracy, though they do not look at the shortcomings of the Allies through rose-tinted spectacles. Beset on all sides by totalitarian countries, exposed to an unremitting blockade, bereft of her main revenue—the tourist trade—Switzerland yet holds firm. Her citizen soldiers take their rifles home when they finish their manœuvres. Their forefathers died for the "Comradeship Under Oath." They are ready to do likewise. . . .

After my memorable year in the Liebburg it was natural that I should have become deeply interested in all things Swiss. I started to explore Swiss literature and made many delightful discoveries. There was the quiet, deep poetry of Gottfried Keller's *Grüne Heinrich*, the full-blooded Renaissance tales of Conrad Ferdinand Meier, the earthiness of Carl Friedrich Georg Spitteler. Perhaps the novelist whom I liked best was Albrecht Bitzius, who wrote under the name of Jeremias Gotthelf (Jeremiah Godhelp). Nothing very much happened in his books, but the setting was ever fresh and attractive. The Alm, the mountain pasture, the village nestling against the rocky heights, the waterfall, the wooden chalet—how dusty and hot seemed the city after I had lost myself in his pages. His philosophy was simple, his creed that of the straightforward peasant who toiled and prayed, for whom love was without anguish and whose most formidable problems sprang from a protracted drought or the loss of a calf. But the Swiss spirit could also soar to the uttermost heights of human knowledge and thought. Burckhardt has given the world perhaps the best book on the Renaissance, Pestalozzi made the first intelligent attempt to challenge the tradition that children are merely mischievous little animals by his conception of planned education. Vinet's revaluation of theology smoothed the way towards the harmonious collaboration of the different creeds in the federation. Scores of others from " Father " Bodmer and Solomon Gessner (who were both important forerunners of the classic revival of German literature, reaching its flowering in Goethe and Schiller) to Edouard Rod, Johanna Spyri (the great friend of children and author of many juvenile books), or Johann Kaspar Lavater, the creator of the vogue and science of physiognomy. The music of Ernest Bloch and Hans Huber, the art of Paul Klee, the modern poetry of Charles Ferdinand Ramuz—all these served to endear to me the country of my mental awakening. It is true that in my subsequent visits I found the colours a shade less bright, the people a shade less friendly, than they had lived in my memory; but the fundamental conceptions remained unchallenged. Switzerland was for me the country of Anita Hofer-Roth, the finest lady I had ever known. The only emotion which disturbed my admiration of the Swiss was . . . envy, for whereas their country was rich and respected, free and stable in a fluid world, my own Central Europe . . . It was not until I came to England for the first time that the magic of Switzerland began

to fade a little. Even to-day I could wish for nothing better than to rush down the ski-ing slopes of Kandersteg or wander around Territet . . . drink cider in a Basle restaurant on the river-side or eat one of those strange tower-like cakes in a Zurich pastry shop. Perhaps God will grant safety to the Swiss in the midst of a maddened world—but almost a miracle would be necessary to grant them complete immunity from all totalitarian influences. From time to time the Nazi newspapers lash themselves into a frenzy because Switzerland seems unwilling to join the " New Order " and because her editors still proclaim their opinions regardless of Dr. Goebbel's aberrations.

It was in Basle that I felt perhaps most sensitive to the unique spirit of Switzerland ; Basle, that outjutting bastion wedged between Germany and France. Her three railway stations belong to three different states and her people are a special and well-contented group in the commonwealth. They are proud and self-assured in their national consciousness in spite of their cosmopolitan setting. When I asked the headmaster of a Basle school if he called himself a German he protested indignantly, " No, no," he said. " I am a Swiss—if you prefer it, a German-speaking Swiss."

He spoke " high German," the purest " Schriftsprache," but when he spoke over the telephone he immediately lapsed into the dialect of " Schwyzer Dutsch." Later he explained to me proudly that it was the original language of Walther von der Vogelweide, the famous knight-poet of the Middle Ages, which has been kept uncorrupted in Switzerland.

On the other hand, French influence is clearly discernible in the Basle architecture as well as in the clothes and deportment of the people. " Thanks " is " merci," and I heard a tram conductor ask for gangway with a loud *excusez*. In the theatre the rows of seats were called " Rang " instead of the German *Reihe*.

" Peace and prosperity "—however precarious peace had become—was the keynote of Basle when I last visited it. The great Muenster, the swiftly-flowing Rhine, were bathed in a golden September glow. But the frontier bridge was mined and at every twenty yards a young Swiss soldier stood guard.

In the streets the silence and tidiness were still the most striking characteristics. The centre of the city is lined with fine shops, the ancient narrow, picturesque lanes with old but well-preserved houses. The Gothic Muenster was originally built as a Roman

Catholic Church, but to-day Protestants worship in it. The former church of the Barefoot Monks has become a museum. From its west door the visitor is greeted by the *Lallenkonig*, a crowned stone head with a bushy beard. In earlier days it ornamented one of the old Rhine bridges, where with its flickering red tongue and rolling eyes it mocked and defied the approaching maurader. To-day it may be regarded as a symbol of the Swiss attitude towards the totalitarian states. Even in the midst of a world war the *Nebelspalter*, that famous Swiss comic paper, dares to put the dictators and their satellites in the pillory.

Whenever I was at Basle I found an hour or so to spare for the new art gallery. It boasts some excellent Boecklins, though I confess I find these pictures of an over-romantic German too nebulous and *tiefsinnig*, my preference being for the superb series of Holbeins. These are gaunt and bare in their realism, appealing with uncompromising force to the fundamental emotions, shocking and purifying the soul.

I wandered through the scattered buildings of Basle University, some of which hang like swallows' nests over the river: you enter a house on the hilltop and find yourself on the third or fourth floor. It is an old and rich university, with its own hospitals and clinics and a faculty of professors whose fame is world-wide. The Swiss universities have done more for international understanding than those of any other country; they are more liberal in their welcome to foreign students and pride themselves on having sent graduates into every country in the world. Scholarly tolerance is the universities' outstanding characteristic, in the same way that the huge Roman Catholic Church of St. Anthony in Basle symbolizes religious tolerance. It is a hard-won virtue, and therefore the more greatly valued, for the Swiss, with their memories of Calvin and Zwingli and many centuries of strife and hate, regard their broad-mindedness as something of which they are entitled to be proud.

Here in Basle I met Felix Moeschlin, one of Switzerland's most prolific modern writers, playwright, poet and novelist. I had read some of his poems as well as his long pacifist play which was printed in *Die Schweiz*, the leading Swiss literary monthly. His faith in the realization of mankind's longing for universal and lasting peace was pathetic; but while Herr Roth's mind had snapped under the terrible disappointment of the first world war, Moeschlin went on fighting for his ideal.

"It is all so simple," he told me. "Perhaps that is the very

reason why the nations cannot see the light. Here in Switzerland we have created a practical utopia. Ask any of my compatriots, whether in Ticino, in Aargau or in Geneva, if he would prefer to belong to some other country. His answer will be an emphatic 'No!' Why? Probably he cannot tell you. Perhaps it is because we have a genuine democracy: by means of the referendum we can repeal any law passed by the Bundesversammlung that we consider unjust; perhaps it is because we have neither titles nor privileged classes, yet sufficient scope for individual enterprise. In Switzerland we have neither the very poor nor the very rich. And despite the fact that we speak four different languages—for Ræto-Roman or Romansch is an accepted official language in addition to Italian, German and French—we understand one another perfectly. . . ."

I met him again in 1938, but this time he was less happy and considerably more anxious. Hitler had annexed Austria and the days of Munich were close upon us. He had just returned from a trip which had taken him to almost every capital in Europe, and it had left him deeply pessimistic, in spite of Mr. Chamberlain's faith in Hitler's word, about the chances of peace.

"It is a terrible thing for a pacifist to admit," he told me, "but I feel we are bound to have another war before long."

"Why the compulsion?" I asked him.

"Because apparently mankind has not learned the lesson of the last cataclysm. The next war is going to be so terrible that it will teach mankind this long-needed lesson. The slaughter of 1914–18 will be dwarfed by the massacre and suffering of this new holocaust. Indeed, it will not be a war at all, but rather a series of gigantic revolutions. We shall need all our faith if we are to survive it. This time, I firmly believe, it will be truly a war to end all wars. . . ."

V

Perhaps the Swiss realize the value of their "practical utopia" because they are enthusiastic travellers and shrewd observers of other countries. There are small Swiss colonies all over the world, and Swiss hotel experts held high executive positions in practically every big hotel concern. Swiss surgeons, watchmakers, sailors, waiters were to be found in every country. If they were able they all returned home in their old age and

the community reaped the benefit of their experiences. Weather-beaten missionaries, like old Uncle Steiger, were common enough in many small villages, living on their memories, content, after their survey of the wide-open spaces, with the micro-cosmos of their motherland.

In Berne, the homely, charming capital of the Swiss Eidgenossenschaft, I went into a philatelist's shop in the romantic Zytglockenturm. I had promised my brother—twelve years old and an enthusiastic stamp collector—a few South American stamps. A thick-set man with a greying thatch of hair, a determined chin and one blind eye, brought a number of stamp-books to the counter, and I was lucky enough to find an especially attractive Colombian five-centavos stamp with a splendid ship as the main decoration.

"I'm sure my brother will appreciate this," I said. "He is crazy about ships. His head is full of distant countries, pirates and South Sea islands. In his stamp collection he finds some compensation for having travelled so little. No doubt many philatelists have taken up the hobby for the same reason."

I noticed that the stamp merchant was looking with more than ordinary interest at this Colombian stamp. I thought that, being a Swiss, he would not resent a friendly question.

"Perhaps you, too, are a frustrated adventurer?" I suggested.

He laughed.

"Yes," he said, "you may indeed call me an adventurer, but not a frustrated one. The ship on this Colombian stamp is a man-o'-war called *Cartagena*. She was designed, originally, as a private yacht for the Sultan of Morocco. Believe me or not, I skippered her from New York to Santiago. The cargo was dynamite, and our adventures surpassed anything you could find in a thrilling sea story."

This was enough to awaken the curiosity of any newspaper-man, so I persuaded him to lunch with me. I spent two more days in Berne than I had intended, so that Heinzelmann—for that was his name—might tell me his life story. When he had finished his yarning of thirty-three years on the high seas, I asked him why he had not made a book of it. He scratched his head and said he was not good at pen-pushing, but he might attempt it some time during the slack season, which, in fact, he did, for two years later I received a copy of the book, published by a Zurich firm.

Heinzelmann's life was more or less typical of the Swiss

" gentleman adventurer," who starts from the land-locked country to explore the four corners of the earth. For an Englishman to " go to sea " is no great matter ; he has been doing it for countless generations. He is an islander. But for a Swiss to do so implies a tremendous decision. Obviously Heinzelmann must have possessed exceptional qualities, and I told him so. He laughed at me.

" Landlubbers make the best sailors," he declared. " At the sailors' training school in Hamburg they treated me with contempt, because I was not born and bred by the sea. Yet some of the finest merchant commands have been held by landlubbers. There was even a landlubber captain of the *Bremen*. His name, appropriately enough, was Ziegenbein. . . ." (Goatleg.)

He told me that his father—as his grandfather and great-grandfather before him—had been a well-to-do brewer and owner of the " Zum Klosterli " restaurant near the Bear Pit in Berne, where a few bears are kept in comfortable captivity as living symbols of the ancient city's coat-of-arms. But he died when young Fritz was still absorbed in reading tales of adventures and his mother married again. His stepfather was a colonel in the Swiss army and a severe disciplinarian. " He would announce at dinner a family route-march for the following day. It began at four in the morning and we marched ten hours a day. I reacted to his repression by getting involved in every possible mischief with the boys of the neighbourhood and in the end I was sent to the orphanage for a dose of self-discipline. I was there for a year, but as the result of my persistent appeals, my mother arranged that I should be transferred to the German sailors' school at Waltershof, near Hamburg."

The Hamburg school was expensive—the tuition fee over 1,500 marks a year—and the training Spartan. The boys were divided into " families." Heinzelmann's number was 1401 ; his " uncle " was 1376, his " father's " number 1351, his " great uncle " 1326 and his " grandfather " 1301—that is, each of his " relatives " was divided from him in the school list by twenty-five " numbers." The " families " held proudly to their unity. The fare consisted mostly of salt pork and hard tack—to prepare the young men for the near-starvation they might have to endure at sea. When, at the end of his course, the school would not get him a ship, young Fritz went to Hamburg himself, obtaining his first berth on the Danish sailing ship *Axira*, of 220 tons, a leaking tub in which the pumps had to be worked

every four hours. It was a cargo-boat, carrying coal, salt and oilcake between Germany, Britain and Denmark.

Heinzelmann spent seven months on the *Axira*, transhipped to the German steamer *Licata* (belonging to a line which lost its ships with such amazing regularity that they were known as " Hamburg coffins "), survived his first collision and then found another berth on a sailing ship on the Hamburg-Valparaiso line. He attained his A.B. ticket before he was nineteen, and was only twenty-five when he was given his captain's " patent " in Hamburg, having passed first among twenty-two candidates. During the war he held many important commands and did not retire until 1935, by which time he had lost one eye and most of his savings, the first in an accident, the second in the big American crash.

I asked him to tell me more about the *Cartagena* and her cargo of dynamite, for whereas he had described with great gusto his many adventures on the seven seas and in dozens of different ships he seemed reluctant to tell this particular tale. In the end he surrendered to my importunity.

He had been happy to be given the command of the *Cartagena*. In a former " reincarnation " she had been a Moroccan cruiser. She carried a crew of three hundred. Her ammunition stores and fo'c'sle had been transformed into cargo holds, but as she had no lading apparatus, neither winches nor cranes, she could only carry special cargo, which was all " hand-laden."

" My contract was given me," Heinzelmann said, " by a very charming American, of distinct Latin type, who told me that he was twenty-five times a millionaire. I checked up on that and found he was speaking the truth. This was in 1919, before the U.S.A. had gone dry, and my owner had decided to make some money—a good deal of money—by running arms to different South American revolutions, the leaders of which paid well and in gold. He did not tell me in advance what my first cargo was to be, but I had to sign a clause by which I undertook to carry any cargo he chose to give me to any port in South and Central America. When he told me that the cargo was to be dynamite I should have liked to throw the contract back at him. To take dynamite to the tropics was an extremely foolhardy operation, to make no mention of T.N.T., an explosive even more dangerous, which we were also to carry. It is true that I was promised five hundred dollars a month for the minimum period of a year and five thousand dollars

extra reward if I fulfilled my task successfully, but this he could well afford, seeing that he was to receive almost a dollar for every pound of cargo we took from New York to Santiago de Cuba. My charming employer also wanted to 'lose' the ship after the cargo had been delivered, as she was heavily insured. Once more I felt like walking out—but I reflected that he could not force me to wreck the *Cartagena*, and I had no intention of doing so. . . ."

"Well, what happened with the dynamite?" I asked.

"The difficulties began even before we started," said the old captain, "for at that time it was not easy to obtain a crew for any sort of ship, and to get a crew for a ship laden with explosives was almost impossible. At New York the harbour authorities forbade me to anchor, so I had to stay about twenty-five miles from the city, in the bay of Atlantic Island and that made the hiring of a crew still more difficult. I need scarcely tell you it was not a first-class crew when I did manage to collect it. The first engineer calmly informed me that he had shipped with me because his wife had left him and he wanted to die, but was too much of a coward to commit suicide. He said he hoped that the *Cartagena* would go under and so save him the bother of shooting himself. The second engineer was not quite right in his head. He refused to sail without his motor-bike because he liked to tinker with the engine! He spent all his free time with it on deck letting the engine roar with an open exhaust. Some of the engine-room men were Communists, and by the time we had reached Santiago de Cuba they had caused so much unrest among the crew that I had to hand them over to the police. The first and second officers were drunkards. In fact, there were few men aboard worthy of trust. A fine ship indeed! We had to set out twice, for the first time we had to put back for repairs, and on the trip to Cuba there were two attempts to sabotage the ship by opening sea cocks. In Cuba we were unloaded by convicts, as no dockers would undertake the dangerous job. South of Jamaica, I weathered a cyclone and about a hundred miles from Colon the ship was in such a state that I was preparing to give her up for lost when an American passenger boat took us in tow. The sequel to that was a spate of law-suits, the owners of the American steamer demanding salvage money, the insurance company refusing to pay on the plea that the *Cartagena* had been damaged not by the elements but by sabotage. As a matter

of fact there was no leak on the ship, as the saboteurs had closed the sea-cocks as soon as we were taken in tow. . . . My owner was furious, but he did not sack me. Instead he promoted me inspector of his line! But I made him cancel the obnoxious clause in my contract . . . No more dynamite for me!"

The old man brushed aside any allusion of mine to the courage and resourcefulness he must have exhibited in all these adventures and hair's-breadth escapes. His sober Swiss mind saw nothing extraordinary in his achievements. But there was a nostalgic flavour in his reminiscences as he recalled the far-off tropical countries, and the wonders of storm and calm that he had encountered, the girls he had amused himself with in many ports and the hard realism of the sailors' life. Now he lives in a shop twenty-five yards square. If he misses the waves and spray, the wind and the stars, he does not complain. A Swiss Ulysses returned from his long voyaging cannot feel discontent amid the beauty and peace of his homeland. This compensation is ample indeed. I think Herr Heinzelmann is just as happy behind his counter as Captain Heinzelmann used to be on the bridge, dreaming of his mountains and lakes.

VI

On the road from Schaanwald to Buchs, I met another Swiss wanderer and seeker of adventures. Schaanwald is one of the frontier posts between Austria and Switzerland. A young Austrian sculptor and I had decided to walk from Innsbruck to Zurich. We had little money and thought that what we saved on fares we could spend on a prolonged holiday in Tessin. We had climbed the Arlberg in a blinding snowstorm and descended the pass through Bludenz and the homely Tyrolean villages. We spent a night in Feldkirch and planned to do twenty-five miles next day. Half-way to Buchs we came upon an unusual group on the asphalt highroad. Four horses, a small ammunition cart, a sheep dog, a bicycle and a car formed the background to a dispute of four human beings. One of the disputants was a Swiss officer, the second a Swiss corporal, the third a civilian, and the fourth a boy in nondescript semi-military uniform. The horses were well-kept and splendid animals; they seemed to be impatient at the delay while their owner was protesting against the dry, curt tones of the official who had just got out of the car.

"You must return immediately to Schaanwald," the official

was saying. "The horses must be examined against glanders infection—they may have to be inoculated . . ."

"But I have just received permission from the cantonal veterinary surgeon in Berne," the officer protested, "we are certainly not going to march back along this icy, dangerous road."

The official bridled.

"I am not interested in what Berne has told you," he replied. "Here at the frontier it is my authority which counts. You must turn back at once!"

The officer was not impressed.

"And with our marching column," he retorted calmly, "there is no authority except mine. I refuse to go back."

"I tell you for the last time . . ."

"We won't move a step."

In the end the dispute was settled by a compromise. The official consented to make an examination on the spot. The horses endured some prodding and poking, the necessary papers were made out and the appropriate seals and stamps affixed to them.

"That will be a hundred and fifteen francs," said the official.

"What?" cried the young boy who seemed to be acting as treasurer. "That's sheer robbery."

To my astonishment the official, without a murmur, at once reduced his terms.

"All right," he said. "For you—a hundred and two francs."

The money was paid and the little column was preparing to depart. But I could no longer curb my curiosity. I approached the officer.

"Excuse me, if I seem to be inquisitive," I said, "but where are you coming from?"

"Athens and Istanbul," he answered coolly, as he climbed into the saddle.

The episode was becoming more and more interesting. But the horsemen seemed to be unwilling to linger and the sheep dog was sniffing suspiciously around our legs. Then I heard the officer addressing his horse—by a Hungarian name. He called it "*Kedves*" which in English means "Darling."

"Excuse me," I said again, "but is your horse Hungarian?"

"Yes . . . what of it?"

"Nothing . . . only I also am Hungarian and interested in horses. Couldn't you tell me something about your journey and . . . about *Kedves*?"

When he heard I was Hungarian, he became more friendly. He said his name was Hans Schwarz, and we agreed to meet in Buchs where an official reception was being prepared for him and his companions to celebrate their return from a seven months' odyssey.

Next afternoon I had a long talk with him and heard part of his story. It was characteristic of Swiss energy and joy in adventure. He was a cavalry officer, stationed in Berne, and one day he decided to show the world that Swiss horse-breeding could compete even with the most famous studs of Hungary, Turkey and Britain (this order of rank was not mine, but Captain Schwarz's). He took his idea to the Bundesrat, where they backed it with one thousand Swiss francs. The rest of the money was collected in subscriptions to a book which Herr Schwarz promised to write about his adventures—though several firms and individuals contributed "*à fonds perdu.*" Then, with Corporal Pfeuti and Hans Schwarz junior, with four horses and a sheep dog, he set out to ride across the Alps and through Central and Eastern Europe to Istanbul. Their route led them through Liechtenstein, Austria, Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria and then back to Austria through Greece, Albania and Jugoslavia. Here they travelled a few stages by train, but mounted again in Tyrol and crossed the Arlberg in the same snowstorm against which we had battled on foot. A previous ride had taken Captain Schwarz to Hungary, Austria, Slovakia and Bohemia; another to Italy and France. He told me that he was planning to ride through Russia the following year if he could get the permission of the U.S.S.R. authorities. He "introduced" me to his horses—Arbalete, an apple-grey which had carried him from the Jura to the Atlantic Ocean and had crossed the Alps to the Adriatic; Franc-Montagnard, a light chestnut stallion from the stud of Avenches; Tell, a fiery brown mare and Winkelried, a brown gelding; splendid animals, all of them carefully selected for their staying power. I also "met" "Chueri," the sheep-dog from the mountain pastures "who" boasted a pedigree a yard long.

At the post office in Buchs I found some money awaiting me which enabled us to travel in state instead of "*per pedes apostolorum.*" As we had no fixed plans we decided to follow Captain Schwarz and his triumphant column. Although bound for Berne they had to make many detours as almost every Swiss town or village wanted to see them—the three "soldiers" who

had brought fame to Swiss endurance, pluck and enterprise. In their wake we visited St. Gallen, Winterthur, Zurich, Lucerne, Biel, Langenthal, Solothurn and Berne. By the time we parted we had become fast friends, and Captain Schwarz promised to let me know when he planned his next trip; so that, if possible, I might join him. That project never matured—but I still carry in my memory his erect figure, his clipped speech, his friendly smile. Like Frau Anita, Captain Heinzelmann and Felix Moeschlin, he is to me a symbol of Switzerland.

VII

Yet one more adventurous spirit I met in Switzerland—but this time he was an adventurer of the mind, an explorer of the spirit, of the hidden depths of the human psyche. Professor Paul Häberlin held a chair at the University of Basle, but it was in Geneva that I made his acquaintance.

Of all Swiss cities I found Geneva the least likeable. Not because of the Genevese; though it is true that the violent reaction to Calvin's puritan reign of intellectual terror had produced some curious dives and aberrations in the back streets; but rather because Geneva was connected in my mind with the most tragic failure of our times. Here again I must put in a reservation—for it was not the League of Nations which failed, but its members. They built up something, only to knock it to pieces again like a child playing with bricks. The Swiss cannot be held responsible for the League's failure; indeed, in so far as it succeeded, their contribution was considerable. Nevertheless Geneva carried the stigma of frustrated dreams. She seemed to be haunted by the ghost of a man who had never visited her—the gaunt ghost of that well-meaning "saviour of mankind," President Wilson. I had attended some of the League Council meetings and always returned with the saying of the Swedish Chancellor Oxenstierna ringing in my ears: "My son, if you knew with what little wisdom the world is governed!" The farce of ineffective sanctions! The long speeches packed with noble sentiments which subsequent private negotiations in luxury hotels made hollower than a rotten tree! The committees, secretaries, translators, newspapermen, secret protocols and artificial crises! The whole witches' Sabbath, so futile and, alas, so ridiculous!

But when I met Professor Häberlin, the League was not in session, and the Geneva hotels did not harbour their queer

assortment of politicians, international adventurers, cranks and dreamers. He had come to Geneva to deliver a lecture, and as I had read a few of his books I asked a mutual friend for an introduction. His small beard was flecked with grey, his moustache hid a humorous and sensitive mouth; his eyes were deep-set and dark below a lofty forehead, but there was little of the recluse sage about his neat, spare figure.

For him philosophy was mental adventure. But not an adventure of theory—for he believed that the philosophical ideas of humanity should be put to a practical use. One of his most famous books is called "*Wider den Ungeist*"—"Against the Unspiritual," a call for a pause in which to think, to ponder. He saw clearly, long before the storm, that only a fundamental ethical re-orientation could save humanity, show a path out of chaos. But he was not like many fashionable thinkers—there was a spate of them in America—who offered an infallible panacea for all spiritual problems if the reader would only sit back and imbibe the wine of their wisdom. He demanded co-operation from his readers, a strong mental exercise; and his philosophy was just as much that of everyday life as of the rare heights on which humanity strives towards the infinite. He was especially interested in education, which he approached from the fundamental question: can one human being educate another? can experiences be transmitted? He dealt with the problems of marriage, the question whether the *motive* for marriage was its basic support, how far sex was a danger for the lasting harmony of marital life; he spoke of "taking the poison out of love" and described the constant struggle for power which went on in every marriage. His short volume on *The Miraculous* presents his thesis that too little knowledge leads away from God, while the possible total of human knowledge can only lead to Him. I found this short work of his the happiest and most satisfactory; behind the crystal clear arguments there burned the white heat of religious conviction. With his *Reflections on Natural Philosophy* he made an excursion into ontology and he also wrote a brilliant little book on the much-ridiculed inferiority complex.

Our talk took place late in 1938, when the skies were reflecting the fires burning in Spain and China and the conflagration was creeping nearer and nearer to the heart of Europe, and I asked him what he regarded as the dominant idea in our restless and unhappy Europe.

" Superstition," he answered after a little hesitation.

He was not only a polished writer, but when he spoke his sentences were as rounded and self-contained as if he were reading from a book. I tried hard to hold his words in my mind and made notes as soon as we parted.

" Superstition is all that is faith and yet not pure faith. It is the caricature of faith—for faith presupposes a clear conception of our position. Superstition is a misdirected insight into the same position. Faith is loyalty to God and trust in Him; superstition is faith in a humanized God, without the divine qualities of Christ. Look at the dictators—they are all human beings who have put themselves, or been put by others, in the place of God. All unclean faith—whether it is Nazism or Fascism—is superstition. Religious faith cannot be soiled by anything except the human's insistence on his independence—while superstition is nothing but self-sufficiency carried to absurd extremes. The dictators want to abolish belief in God because they can brook no rivals. Their superstition is evident in the *demonization* of religion, faith, cult. The Man-God, represented by the dictator, stands for threatening and revengeful power. ' Look at me,' says the Dictator, ' I am strong and all-knowing. Nothing can be hidden from my secret police. My followers are faithful because they fear me. I am the Man-God. Nothing can harm me. I have set a demon in place of the god of your childhood. I demand absolute submission such as you would not even give to God. Yet I demand less, for am I not willing to grant you crumbs of my largesse, physical signs of my condescending benevolence which no legendary miracle could equal . . . ? ' Superstition—whether you call it the teaching of the Herrenvolk, the Second Roman Empire, or the ascendency of economic considerations above all things of the spirit and mind—is the keynote of our world to-day. We must get rid of it. Even we, Swiss, have become infected by it. No nation is free from its contamination. The sooner we realize how far we are from educating mankind and turning little animals into thinking men, the sooner shall we start on our march towards a lasting faith and peace. . . ."

He stopped suddenly and smiled at me almost apologetically.

" Forgive me," he said. " It is one of my hobby horses. I get carried away by the seriousness of all this. . . . Now tell me about your country. I know, of course, some of your

psychologists and philosophers. Anybody I ought to know whom I haven't met yet?"

VIII

My thoughts still travel back longingly to the "practical utopia" and its citizens. The Swiss utopians, I am sure, will play their part whole-heartedly in the new Europe, when the present anguish and violence have passed away together with the superstition which Professor Häberlin denounced so eloquently.

SERMON FOR ONE

THIS IS the ghostly hour before dawn and you are alone. The hour when vitality is at its lowest ebb, when, according to the medical statistics, most people die; but also the hour when, in solitude, free from distraction of any kind, you are able to review your life and dreams with cruel clarity. A moment ago you were asleep, warmly wrapped in the cotton-wool of the subconscious; now you are wide-awake and stare into the darkness. The fire has burned to a faint glow of embers and there is an uneasy pause in the noise of traffic.

Yes, this is the time when you can add up your spiritual accounts, strike a balance; when you sit in judgment on yourself and deliver sentence. You contemplate death and its loneliness—as lonely as this hour before the dawn. That is the lesson of Hofmannsthal's *Everyman*. When Mors touches him on the shoulder at the banquet, friend and mistress alike desert him. Three score and ten—how pitifully short the span of life seems to you when you measure it against the infinite. Birth and death, the two lonely milestones, and in between them the long and arduous road on which we have to adapt ourselves painfully to all the complications of civilized living. In this hour before dawn not even your nearest and dearest exist in your mind; you are utterly alone. You are in the prisoner's dock; you are also judge and jury; you are both counsel for the prosecution and counsel for the defence. Nor is it you alone, your body and mind, which is on trial—the ideas with which you have

influenced others, the plans you made to better yourself and improve the lot of your fellows, the schemes you devised to evade the world's pitfalls; all these must be judged, and who could be a more merciless judge than yourself?

SO you have amused yourself with pebbles, trying to build them into a mosaic of memories? Has the bag been emptied? Oh, no, there is still a jumble of unassorted stones at the bottom; but they won't fit into any pattern. The experiences of one human being cannot be drained by a million words; nor can an entire continent be dissected and analyzed in a few hundred pages. Much you have forgotten, more you do not care to remember. Like scenes in a badly cut film, details flash across your vision: the long, winding road from Kotor to Cetinje, with the crosses marking the spots where motorists hurled to death . . . a talk with a young Finnish Communist in the wonderful Helsinki railway station which his comrades were later to bomb so persistently . . . the *Holzriese*, that mile-long wooden slide for the timber of the Austrian mountains, rushing down from the slopes of the Schneeberg . . . a spiritualist seance with Rudi Schneider, the Vienna medium who was born in the same little town as Adolf Hitler . . . a long talk with the suave Cretan statesman Venizelos, a rakish beret on his smooth bald head . . . a thousand and one things. Your epitaph has turned out to be little more than a fragmentary reconstruction of a dead world; a world gone for ever, yet recalled with longing by thousands who, in spite of the harsh realities of 1942, still live in a nostalgic dream.

WAS IT NOT Mencius, the Chinese sage, who told the story of Buddha and the Demon? The Demon had been holding the world in terror, and at his approach the denizens of a thousand planets trembled. So great was his arrogance and power that he strutted around the universe looking for someone to challenge. And so he met Buddha.

"I am the Lord of All the Worlds!" he cried when he saw Gotama sitting on a lotus leaf, lost in meditation. "Everybody must bow to my mastery! My breath fans the suns. My eyes stop the stars in their courses. Look at me and tremble!"

The gentle Sakyamuni did not look at him. The Demon, though put slightly out of his stride, went on bragging:

"With a single leap I can put behind me Space and Time," he cried. "In three leaps I can reach the ultimate limits of the universe."

Then Buddha did indeed raise his eyes and smile.

"Try it," he said.

The Demon laughed and shook his head; the fiery sparks of his burning mane flew beyond the Pleiades and scorched the fringe of Orion. Then he took one flying leap and landed beyond our solar system, in the primeval darkness of the loneliest space. He did not pause there, but leapt yet again, and now he was æons away from the faintest trace of suns and moons, in the velvet darkness of unborn worlds. He jumped once more and came to the five pillars that mark the ultimate End of the Universe, gleaming in the black void. He stretched out a claw and scratched his mark on one of the pillars. Having done all this, he laughed again and in a single bound returned to Buddha, whom he found still sitting on the lotus leaf.

"I have been there and back," he cried triumphantly. "Surely thou wilt now do homage to me as thy master!"

But Buddha merely smiled again and held up his hand. There, at the base of his middle finger, was a tiny scratch—it was the mark of the Demon. And the Demon, with a hoarse shout of despair, departed to the outermost darkness, this time never to return.

BETTER put on the light; you won't get to sleep again. Yes, Mencius was a wise man. His parable of the Infinite held in Buddha's palm is indeed a comforting solution to our questing restlessness. Why rebel and protest when everything is dwarfed by the Infinite? In a hundred years, fifty even, how insignificant the posturings of the dictators, the ravages of Nazi ironclads! The earth heals swiftly, you tell yourself—and the philosophy of the Infinite may be applied to almost everything. A toothache, a lost battle, the humiliation of helplessness in the face of ruthless power, a train you have missed—place either of these against the endless vista of time and space and—what does it matter? The Stoics were groping in the same direction, however small their concern with the unseen.

What does it matter that Europe—the Europe you loved and possessed as a wonderful woman is loved and possessed—has been lost, sunk like Atlantis? What does it matter if the Continent to be resurrected in her stead will bear little resemblance to the beloved? Buddha holds up his hand and there, at the base of his middle finger, is the tiny scratch made by the Demon —and all the demons, whether you call them by the name of Napoleon, Nero, Herod or Hitler. . . . You may console yourself if you wish with Latin tags of *errare humanum est* and *vanitatum vanitas*, you may summon to your aid the examples of all the great tribulations which came to the world and, passing, left less trace than the sweeping wave in the wet sand.

But can you do it? This is the hour of confession, of utter frankness. Your windows are heavily curtained, not a glimmer of light must guide the Nazi bomber that buzzes outside like an infuriated wasp. At any moment a bomb may crash through your complacent gambling with the Infinite. None of us can truly realize death until it comes, but it needs little imagination to know the throb of pain and crippling misadventure. Yesterday's newspaper screams of the approach of Nazi hordes to the gates of Moscow and the Don Basin, while in the Far East the little yellow men of Tokio talk glibly of their pre-ordained destiny. There is scarcely a scrap of paper in the room which does not bear witness to the danger with which we are beset; from the moment you open your eyes to the moment when you slide back into the relief of unconsciousness, you cannot escape the struggle that is being waged for the soul of Europe . . . the soul, perhaps, of our whole world civilization. Can you do it? And if you should be able to comfort yourself with the Infinite, what about those who are near to you, for whom you work and fight? You may visualize your own destruction with a certain amount of equanimity, but what of them? Women and children are in the front line to-day and the harm which is done to them hourly cannot be explained away or minimized by the philosophical parable of the venerable Mencius. . . .

PERHAPS you can find consolation in the past. Did not your grandfather tell you that one of your ancestors was supposed to have been an alchemist, prying into the secrets of

nature in a Vienna cellar? Through the night he read his Bible, but at the crack of dawn he stood at his furnace, searching in the heavy fumes for the appearance of the Philosopher's Stone. But when one day he saw gold glittering at the bottom of the alembic, he buried it deep in the earth and abandoned it. For he was not interested in gold—only in the quest of it. Perhaps this is the lot of all those who pose questions and are only thrilled in the quest for the answer, not the answer itself. Perhaps by delving into the past you could find the moment at which the problems of the present dissolve in a commonplace solution . . . perhaps you could begin where that legendary ancestor of yours left off. . . . Masefield has spoken of the "seekers" who

"... travel from dawn to dusk, till the day is past and by,
Seeking the Holy City beyond the rim of the sky.
Friends and loves we have none, nor wealth nor blest abode,
But the hope of the City of God at the other end of the road."

Put out the light again—in the darkness you may not feel ashamed to toy with this idea of reincarnation. Not the return of a complete personality of some dead sage or master craftsman—just the transference of an infinitesimal fragment, a tiny splinter of a long-lost seeker in your own soul. You are alone, you need not be ashamed. The fishermen fishing for men in the Lake of Genezareth . . . the martyrs singing the psalms of David while hanging from the cross . . . the students mumbling the tenets of Aristotle or the secret rigmarole of the Cabbala. . . . How far back can you go in your search for affinity? Back to the fish crawling in the primeval slime, the monkey gnashing its teeth among the branches on the tree-top, the scarcely upright "missing link" growling until the tribe received him with sullen tolerance? We all carry a heavy burden on our souls, and as we cannot get rid of it we are wise if we determine to profit by the experiences which are wrapped in this invisible bundle. . . . The road which leads from the dim past right up to yourself is long indeed and not clearly charted. To live fully in the present you must have sublimated all the passions of the centuries. To find a law that will justify and rationalize you, to discover the panacea for all the sickness in the world, you must walk that thorny path. Unless, of course, you prefer to depend on the mercy of merciless fate or rely on useless miracles. Though it is difficult to love humanity,

it is impossible not to despise her—and yourself—unless you have learned the lesson of what is behind you. And if you love human beings too much, sooner or later you will be ostracized by the human community, for the governing rule of modern human conduct is indifference, tempered with a restrained egotism.

WAIT . . . and stop to think . . . to-night you must put paid to the past. For two years you have carried in your brain the idea of this epitaph; for more than four months you have tortured your typewriter to translate it into words. Are you satisfied? No, I am not. It would be a poor epitaph if you were; for in every human summing-up there are items forgotten and unaccounted for. This is the hour before dawn, when you can afford to be frank instead of wasting your time on long-winded philosophical reflections.

Have you been honest with your memories? Is it indeed true that the French people whom you met were entirely devoid of that fine audacity which once inspired the Maid to raise the white oriflamme and gave to the defenders of La Rochelle the strength wherewith to endure years of siege, which sent the defenders of Paris leaping into taxicabs to stop the Boche on the Marne? Was Germany's life truly one long nightmare from the flight of the Kaiser until the Nazi bombers set out to blast Poland? Do your own countrymen truly live in glass prisons, from which escape, try how they will, is impossible? Was Vienna—do you swear it?—the tail of the dog, the head of the idiot child, hopelessy inadequate to steer a mutilated state through the storms unchained by Hitler? Did you find only exhibitionists in the land which had given Europe the purest delight in colour, sound, form and ideas? Honestly, now, was the thirst of Spanish soil such as no cataracts of blood could slake? There are hundreds of questions you may be called upon to answer—whether they concern the melancholy of the *saudade*, the striving of the unfinished circle of the Slavs, the desperate deeply-hidden courage of the Dutch, blasted from their stolidity by the five days' war, the peace-longing of fertile Belgium, the slowly-warming reserve of the nations lying under the magic of the Northern Lights or the practical utopia of the Swiss. Are you prepared to answer them and vouch for your answers, chapter and verse?

Oh, you don't know . . . you only wrote what you *felt* and what you *thought* after meeting all those people, listening to their talk, wandering through their cities, earning a precarious living in their shops, factories and offices? Not good enough, my friend. You say that every epitaph merely expresses what the living think of the dead? Well, then, there is one question you cannot dodge. Now that you have buried the Europe of your youth and your dreams, what about the Europe which must be reborn from all the turmoil and suffering, the blood and sweat of millions? What of the future? You may have fooled many, but you have not deceived me—I, who am talking to you in the dead stillness of the night. Behind your epitaph, behind your somewhat restrained lament for a murdered continent there throbs a secret hope that the day will come when she will be resurrected, foam-framed like Venus Anadyomene, riding on the waves in a mother-of-pearl coach, charming all hearts and smiling at the war-weary. How, then, ensure her safety from the attacks of wicked men, so that in peace she may share her happiness and bounty with Scandinavian and Spaniard, Magyar and Muscovite, French and Finn alike? How do you justify your hope? What are *you* going to do to implement it?

AND THERE, at the edge of dawn, alone with my questioner, the preacher of this sermon for one, I gave my answer:

"*You demand the impossible. But it has ever been human presumption to make the endeavour and even failure is not without honour. I admire, envy and pity all the learned men in the free countries of the world who sit down in the peace of their studies and write books, pamphlets, manifestos, saying: 'This is the solution. Lo! I have found it. The magic cure-for-all, the secret panacea. Thus and thus can the fate of the world be settled, the new Europe built, the millennium achieved.' To me they are just as futile as those who scoff at what is called post-war planning, preferring the old* laissez-faire *attitude of letting things drift—to yet another catastrophe. Then there are those who lose themselves in details and debate whether Hitler should be boiled in oil or dropped by parachute over Tel Aviv, whether Mussolini, Antonescu, Quisling and Horthy should be tried by an international court or left to the tender mercies of local revenge. Dare I say that there*

is no infallible remedy for the illness which has killed Europe? There is no short-cut to Utopia. There is no rough-and-ready scheme on which a new, living Europe can be built. It is beyond human possibilities to foresee every eventuality, every conflict, revolution, political surprise or economic difficulty that will come in the train of the world war. We have all of us been guilty at the murder of Europe, and we must all help towards her resurrection. Briton and American alike—for the affairs of Danzig will have become as much the concern of a drugstore keeper in Seattle as of a mill-worker in Oldham. 'Peace is indivisible,' M. Litvinov had said, perhaps with his tongue in his cheek. The future is indivisible, the future of Europe and of the world. If a single country or individual shirks his or her responsibilities, we may as well order another hundred million gasmasks straight away and start building deeper and more spacious air-raid shelters.

"Perhaps after Germany has shattered her manhood in the East, it will not be so difficult to win this war for sanity and freedom. But it will be a hundred times more difficult to win the peace. A commonplace statement, a mere cliché, you say. But truth is so often like that. For want of perpetual restatement it slips through the sieves of foolish minds. Whether this war proves short or long —and long it will be unless we have half a dozen miracles similar to the Russian resistance happen—a long armistice must follow it. A breathing space, cooling off, calming down—in which may be dispersed the inevitable tempest of hate that the Germans, guilty and innocent alike, will have brewed themselves. It cannot, it is too much to hope that it will be stemmed completely, but at least it can be diverted and held up until it is powerless to swamp the minds of those whose destiny it is to build our future. And then the peace . . . a peace in which security, freedom, dignity and faith are restored to the world. Commonplace again! But commonplace also are our most precious possessions . . . the air we breathe, the sun that warms us, the water we drink . . . and for the spirit these four pillars of the future are just as essential.

"It matters little whether an Austrian village belongs to Italy or to Austria so long as its inhabitants can be happy, prosperous and free. It matters little who owns the colonies if their riches are open to all nations. To build, we must first break down, we must destroy the stupid boundaries of economic autarchy, of national prejudice, mistrust and hate.

"An American novelist, Michael Foster, once wrote a book which he called The American Dream. *The phrase became*

widely known and used. No one—not even the author—could say precisely what this 'dream' was. It seemed to be a compound of longing for freedom, of rugged individuality and the conception of a common heritage, of the traditions of frontier settlers and the results of the 'melting-pot.' To every American it appeared as something different—and yet it was the same.

"Why not a 'European Dream'? When the war is ended it will matter little what new boundaries are set, what reparations are enforced or criminals punished, what international air force or similar weapon of power is created. The vast task before us is that of education. We have to educate alike the aggressors and the victims. We have to eradicate hate and prejudice. This cannot be done in a day nor in a year of Sundays. It will be the hardest task that humanity has ever faced—but it will be the most gloriously fruitful.

"Europe, my new Europe, the Europe of all good Europeans, will be re-born under the sign of this 'European Dream.' When and under what circumstances I do not know, but of this I am sure—that one day I shall land in Calais, turn eastwards and say: I have come home again. This is Europe, the new beloved, mistress and goddess, comrade and idol. There are many things to be done before she faces once more the world, bright in new glory, wiser after her suffering—but that day will come, and nothing can be finer than to have had a share in it. . . ."

I PAUSED and waited for my questioner to reply. But he was silent.

Outside the noises of the grey morning heralded the awakening of the great city. I felt weary, but content. The night had passed. I was ready for the new day. Ready and light-hearted, for though no man who lives by the pen should say it, I felt my work was done.

THE END

London, June–November, 1941.

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